

LWF REPORT

(formerly "Lutheran World")



Confessio Augustana 1530-1980 Commemoration and Self-Examination

Contributions by

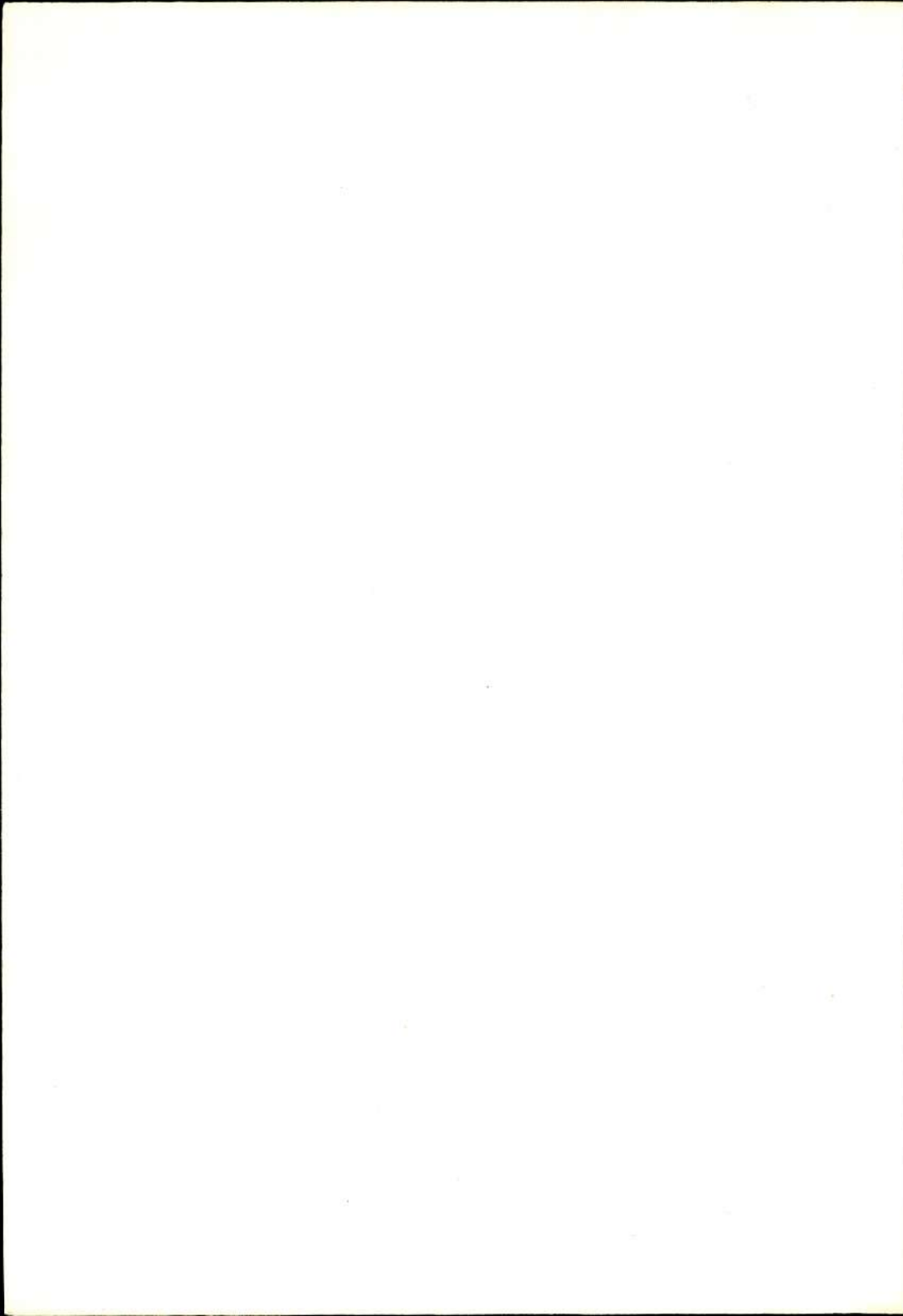
John Reumann
Sutan Hutagalung
Ulrich Kühn

and Discussion Reports

Edited by Vilmos Vajta

June 1980

9



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THE OCCASION: THE JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF 1980

This year Christendom remembers and celebrates an event of 450 years ago which was of decisive significance for the history of the western church. In 1530, at the Imperial Diet in Augsburg, the Emperor Charles V heard the confession of faith in which princes and cities adhering to the Reformation movement gave an account of their faith and that of their congregations in the form of an "apology". The *Confessio Augustana* was formulated with the purpose of setting forth the faith of the one holy church as known from Holy Scripture and the tradition of the West.

450 years later, we look back to a history in which the division of Christendom has been a painful experience. The Augsburg Confession has been accepted only in a part of Christendom, and this burden of history needs to be remembered in our jubilee celebrations. At the same time, however, celebrations all over the world will be influenced by new developments which are beginning to emerge.

This was the occasion which, a few years ago, prompted the Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research to announce a new study project. Since the ecumenical movement of this century and the situation of the churches who confess their faith in terms of the *Confessio Augustana* set the historical event and text of the Confession in a new light, the ecumenical consequences for our Confession and our churches after 450 years were made the theme of a 1978 consultation to which our Institute invited the ecumenical dialog partners of the Lutheran churches. Documentation on the course and findings of this consultation was published in *LWF Report*, No. 6/7 ("The Augsburg Confession in Ecumenical Perspective", edited by Harding Meyer).

But since the *Confessio Augustana* is an authoritative doctrinal basis for evangelical Lutheran churches all over the world and the memory of historic events has immediate contemporary relevance in their life, the occurrence of this jubilee celebration is of special

importance for them. For this reason, the above-mentioned study project also anticipated the help a worldwide study program could provide for the reflection and self-examination of these churches. The purpose was not only to prepare for the jubilee, but also to impregnate it and make it fruitful. It was to be accompanied by research and investigation into the question: What obligations does this Confession impose on us today, and what ways does the heritage of this Confession open up to the renewal of Christian faith in our churches?

In order to stimulate this process of research and investigation, the Institute invited churches which confess their faith according to the Augsburg Confession to participate in a consultation held in Strasbourg (Liebfrauenberg), October 22-27, 1979. Strong arguments could be advanced to warrant the holding of such a special conference. Since the churches which belong to the Lutheran World Federation have accepted the Confessio Augustana as an authoritative doctrinal basis, the main task we set ourselves was to reappraise the historical heritage in confrontation with the current situation in our churches. What content has such a basis for the Christian identity today, and how is this actually lived in the churches? It is often necessary to pose questions of self-examination which require a searching of consciences.

The papers included in the present collection - the results of the 1979 consultation - are intended to communicate the process which was prompted by the jubilee of the worldwide Lutheran church. Their main purpose is to give direction to more profound studies so as to contribute to the renewal of the life of the churches in a faith in the Triune God.

Vilmos Vajta
 Director
 Institute for Ecumenical Research

COMMEMORATION: PROBLEMS POSED TODAY

The consultation opened with three major addresses. Our Institute's intention was to start by concentrating on a few problems which had not yet been considered - or had been too little considered - in the many conferences and publications in preparation for the jubilee year. The ecumenical significance of the event of 1530 had already been considered at the 1978 consultation, but three further themes seemed to us of the greatest importance today.

"The Augsburg Confession in Light of Biblical Interpretation" became at the outset a question as to the relation between Holy Scripture and the Augsburg Confession. Reformation theology has assumed as axiomatic that the Scriptures are the only norm of doctrine and confession. In 1530 the scriptural authenticity of the Confession was taken for granted, but the *Confessio Augustana* includes no hermeneutic reflections about this question. In 1980 theologians and churches pose the question how this claim fits in with biblical scholarship today. In biblical studies we have accepted the method of historical criticism in its diverse forms. It raises fresh questions about the Reformation interpretation of the Bible and about biblical interpretation generally. But, as the address itself notes with astonishment, this confrontation between Scripture and confession has still hardly been undertaken by our churches. Today, relations between biblical evidence and the church's doctrinal assertions are placed in a new light. However difficult it may be to resolve the remaining questions, we can no longer run away from this state of affairs. In the contemporary state of exegetical research we can no longer postpone biblical reflection with reference to the *Confessio Augustana*.

"The *Confessio Augustana* as a Confession of Faith in the Present Historical Setting" is a far-reaching subject. Although the question of the relevance of the Augsburg Confession to the current situation was already raised in previous celebrations, the present situation is distinctive in at least one respect: It played hardly any role even as late as 1930. Developments in all parts of the world have brought the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America closer to the "old world" as a result of speed in communication; the independence struggles and the emergence of new nations have had important church consequences; and the former "mission churches" (mainly under the umbrella of western missions) have grown into

indigenous sister and partner churches. While the heritage - and particularly the confessional tradition - communicated to them through missions has been valued, the demands of a new situation in a non-Christian world for a contemporary confession of faith have become more and more audible. To what extent can the confession be a help as a heritage, and how far are these churches being challenged to contemporary confession? It was with reference to these very important questions that these churches were invited to this consultation to explain their problems. The question of the confession is posed somewhat differently to these churches than it is to churches which derive in historical continuity from the Reformation. In a non-Christian world, while they are certainly committed to the Augsburg Confession, they nevertheless see their loyalty to the Reformation in their own context, and from this position they pose questions to the traditional churches. Fidelity to the traditional heritage and fellowship with the churches of the Augsburg Confession are a summons to a serious new reflection precisely through these "younger" churches.

The theme "The Future of a Tradition", i.e., the tradition of Christian faith handed down in the *Confessio Augustana*, was bound to surface in a period lacking in historical consciousness. To many of our contemporaries it seems ridiculous to be concerned with a statement of faith stemming from the year 1530. It is felt that this backward look covers up the problems of the present and, even more, a vision of the approaching future. But for the Christian faith and its future it cannot be a matter of indifference *whence* it derives. God has entered into the history of humankind. The church of Jesus Christ has taken a certain, and sometimes even tortuous, way under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What has happened in the fulness of time at one historical point fills every time and leads into the future. Today, it is impossible for us to evade the question whether we can consider a historical document as a confession of faith which is decisive for our future. Luther wrote a personal confession (1528) in the certainty that the Lord is coming again in judgment and that we owe the world an account of our faith. The *Confessio Augustana*, like every genuine Christian confession, has a connection with the future. For our generation, too, the future of faith contains the question what we are doing today with the tradition of our fathers. Reflection on this theme is therefore urgently needed for our churches. (VV)

JOHN REUMANN

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION IN LIGHT OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

To the Memory of Warren Quanbeck (1917-1979), Friend and Mentor

Since 1530, the *Confessio Augustana* (CA) has been examined in light of biblical interpretation far less than we might suppose, though our times and consciences, not to mention study of the confessions themselves, call for just such an examination¹.

1. This is so, we may observe, because *the Confessio Augustana*, like the Book of Concord as a whole (cf. Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm 3), *means to be biblical*, even though it has no article on Scripture (cf. CA Preface 8, Conclusion 5 and 7).

2. But it was *the Bible as known and regarded in 1530* to which the *Confessio Augustana* made its appeal. That means the Scriptures as viewed by the confessors less than a decade after Luther's September New Testament and before he and his colleagues had completed their Old Testament translation into German - the Scriptures then existing in terms of text and canon and interpreted less and less allegorically and more and more in light of Christ, gospel, promise, and justification - a Bible assumed to have a unified theology.

3. Since 1530, however, *vast changes have taken place in our knowledge, interpretation, and use of Scripture*, as could be illustrated in many ways.

4. Actually, these shifts ought to be viewed *in light of even broader changes*, like our expanding knowledge of the physical universe, newer concepts of what a human being is (e.g., since Freud), and control by humans over our environment and lives, so that there is decreasing "space" for angels, demons, and even God. There has also been a growing awareness of other religions and, within Christendom, increasing ecumenical involvement.

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5. It is *within this setting of change* that the new methods and techniques for study of Scripture, the so-called *historical-critical method* (better: methods) *must be understood*. Our knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek texts has expanded enormously since 1530, our concept of "canon" has been revolutionized². In many ways, as interpreters, the Reformers stood closer to the Middle Ages and its thinking than they do to us, for whom the Enlightenment is the great turning point. Yet ironically, thanks to modern discoveries, we are able to stand in a position closer to the Semitic, ancient Near Eastern outlook found in so much of both testaments. Could Luther at Marburg, for example, have emphasized "This *is* my body" if he had had in mind an Aramaic sentence minus any verb?³ Hermeneutically speaking, today we increasingly proceed interconfessionally, or non-confessionally. We emphasize "Christian origins", not just "biblical theology"; we see variety more than unity in the New Testament; we are more likely to stress "existential anthropology" than *theology* in the narrow sense, and to find eschatology pervasive. *Sola scriptura* may nowadays be punctuated with a question mark or employed as merely *prima scriptura*⁴.

Aware of such changes, we shall begin with a case where modern biblical interpretation affects all who use Scripture, a matter at the very heart of Christianity, the doctrine of Jesus as the Christ. Then we shall turn to a second major case, one where Lutherans are especially concerned, that of justification.

I. CHRISTOLOGY

Article III of the Confessio Augustana deals with "the Son of God". Its content is a paraphrase of the second article in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, offering an expansion of the New Testament kerygma from the sermons of Acts, in the manner of Ignatius⁵, together with the proper christological formulations of Nicea and Chalcedon, plus a classical doctrine of atonement on Christ's death as propitiation for God's wrath and sacrifice for sin; concluding with the assertion of what Christ's lordship and dominion mean for us. In reporting how "the opponents approve our third article", the Apology underscores that all this is simply restatement of the two great ancient creeds.

This third article may be analyzed as the last of three initial articles where

continuity and agreement with the ancient church are stressed, before beginning on the more particular Reformation understanding of the gospel of salvation as justification in Article IV. It is part of a brief, initial reference to longstanding, common Christianity. What Melancthon is doing in Article III is not unlike what Paul was attempting with the christological formula employed in Romans 1:3-4: An earlier statement about Christ, with which hearers will agree, is cited at the outset as a bridge to the listeners.

Be that as it may, we have in the *Confessio Augustana* a christology from Nicea and Chalcedon which was simply uncontested in 1530. The matter is the more crucial for Lutherans at Augsburg, however, because *their* christology must bear the weight of the gospel which will follow, of "justification through faith". This means "God deep in the flesh", "*in, with, and through* Christ"; so that God is real for us in the same way that Jesus is real for us⁶.

What has happened in biblical interpretation of christology since 1530? The obvious answer is: the quest of the historical Jesus, and the separation of christology from Jesus, in the tracing of Christian origins.

While, of course, there was interest in what Jesus was really like long before "the quest" began, we must say that historical investigation into the man from Nazareth began only after the christological chrysalis began to be shed under the impact of the *Aufklärung*.

Especially in his sermons, Luther, as is well known, had stressed the humanity of Christ, dwelling on the reality of his birth, the infant in the manger, diapers and all, and on the *Anfechtung* of the passion. But Luther, too, looked at Christ within the centuries-old christological scaffolding from Nicea and Chalcedon⁷.

Therefore, only after the English Deists and Reimarus did there begin genuine searching in Scripture for what Jesus historically had said and done. Step by step, the views which today are commonplace in biblical studies arose:

a) Distinctions can be observed in the gospels' accounts concerning many matters in Jesus' life and message. Generally, it was agreed, the synoptics are to be

preferred over John for historicity.

b) Among the synoptics, Mark seems the oldest written account, though among the putative sources an even earlier collection of sayings from Jesus seems reconstructable.

c) Since materials about Jesus must have circulated by word of mouth for several decades before being written down, attention must be given to church interests and influences in this oral period.

d) Nevertheless, a few bedrock facts about Jesus can be ascertained from our sources, even when the most rigorous criticism is applied in interrogating them, through, for example, "pillar passages" or agreed criteria for authenticity⁸. Anything else determined about Jesus must be congruous with these "assured facts".

e) Easter makes a tremendous difference in what was believed, confessed, and taught about Jesus. Indeed, the impact of the resurrection colors all accounts we have of his life. The scholarly aim in recovering the historical Jesus has thus been to get around these hurdles of Easter, the early church, and the paucity of sources to the historical figure of the man from Nazareth, *wie er eigentlich gewesen ist*.

1. The issue forced by modern New Testament studies, contrasting its results with what the Confessio Augustana itself says, is *not simply* a matter of *changes since 1530*, but of *changes between the first century and the christological formulations of the fifth century*.

For some, it would be attractive to argue that for 16 centuries - until 1778 or so - the church universal held to the sort of christology embodied in CA III; since then, these voices would go on, modern rationalist interests have undermined the position of centuries.

The fact is that what CA III says is basically a fifth-century position, and since biblical interpretation concerns itself with first-century documents, not fifth-century dogmas, it almost automatically comes to conclusions which are not

the same as those of Nicea, Constantinople, or the Confessio Augustana. That is to say, on the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, or even the way the atonement is described, the New Testament is not so precise, philosophical-ontological, or dogmatically assertive as the later creeds and confessions. (Cf. in the CA, "duae naturae, divina et humana in unitate personae inseparabiliter coniunctae"; "ein Opfer für die Erbsund"; or "to propitiate God's wrath".) Here Article III reflects as much post-New Testament dogma as it does scriptural formulation. Involved is therefore the intricate question of the legitimacy of later dogmatic development, in light of the New Testament itself.

2. The real question raised by modern biblical studies lies not in the contrast with 1530 or 451, but in the jump assumed by modern scholarship in or after AD 30, i.e., at the resurrection. I refer to the view that christology developed really only after Easter and then progressed through steps of development, for which Paul and John are the biblical climaxes. It is the notion that Jesus himself used virtually no christological titles, did not claim to be messiah, focused his message on God and his coming kingdom; and while he himself announced this kingdom or even proleptically anticipated it, he lived and died as a teacher, prophet, or herald, not as "true God and true man ... inseparably conjoined" in one person. At this point, the dominant results of the quest and recent christological study differ not only from the Confessio Augustana and Nicea, but also from what the gospels themselves state, especially John, that he was Son and Messiah (even if only in secret) during his years on earth.

This separation between "historical Jesus" and "Christ figure" may be seen early in this century in two books by Wilhelm Bousset, who no longer treated Jesus and christology as a single subject in one volume. His *Jesus* (1904; English translation 1906) dealt with the historical figure, as he felt it could be recovered. *Kyrios Christos* (1913; English translation 1970) dealt with the "history of belief in Christ from the beginnings of Christianity [i.e., in the post-Easter community] to Irenaeus"⁹. Bultmann's well-known presentation is but the same format writ large: On the one hand, there is a rather minimistic picture of Jesus the teacher, even more minimal in his famous statement that whoever wishes to put "Jesus" in quotation marks "as an abbreviation for the historical phenomenon with which we are concerned, is free to do so"; this *Leben Jesu* was followed, on the

other hand, by a separate work on New Testament theology for which, in its famed opening sentence, "the message of Jesus" is but one of the "presuppositions for the theology of the New Testament rather than part of that theology itself"¹⁰.

This separation of Jesus and christology, here evidenced, is the fruit of a long process in the "quest". Albert Schweitzer, after tracing that development in the 19th century, thought he had struck a blow for the restoration of dogma to Jesus' own thought when he juxtaposed his own eschatological Jesus as an "either/or" with Wrede's non-messianic teacher figure¹¹. He set up the contrast through the coincidence that their dramatically different views had appeared in books published on the same day in 1901. Actually Wrede's results were the end-product of long decades of historical studies and had been spread far and wide by Liberalism. And though Liberalism died under Neoorthodoxy, its view of Jesus did not. For Bultmann and, even more, Guignebert¹² minimized the historical Jesus as a christological claimant. Though T.W. Manson could opine for Anglo-Saxon scholarship in 1954 that "the further we travel along the *Wredestrasse*, the clearer it becomes that it is the road to nowhere"¹³, Norman Perrin, speaking for German and American New Testament scholars in 1965, could state that the *Wredestrasse* had become the *Hauptstrasse*¹⁴.

The *status questionis* currently in the critical literature is clearly in favor of the position that christology developed chiefly after Easter - in stages of development moving through Palestinian, Jewish-Hellenistic, and Hellenistic Christianity - before Paul and John, let alone the church fathers and Nicea, got ahold of the tradition to elevate christology even more¹⁵.

3. But, it may be asked, what of *the new quest* of the historical Jesus? "Die neue Frage nach dem historischen Jesus", launched in 1953 by Ernst Käsemann¹⁶, has as its aim to assert distinctive features about Jesus and his mission which point to and link him with the Christ of the kerygma.

But firstly it must be said these features usually involve what Jesus *said* rather than what he *did*. Even at the hands of a conservative like Jeremias it is his *ipsissima vox* (not *verba*) which is sought, scarcely a biographical Jesus like Stauffer's¹⁷. In Bornkamm's new-quest *Jesus of Nazareth* all christological

titles are relegated to an appendix¹⁸.

Secondly, we may observe that, though all sorts of conservative lives have appeared under the aegis of the "new quest", the original instigators have quietly abandoned the attempt: Käsemann, after denouncing "dead-ends" in the quest and settling for a somewhat political, libertarian Jesus in *Jesus Means Freedom*¹⁹; Conzelmann, after his RGG³ article²⁰. Bornkamm's may be the only real example, especially if Herbert Braun's belated *Jesus of Nazareth*²¹ is regarded as an appeal for existential humanism, rather than a life. The quest has fragmented, with no real results, in the judgment of many.

This judgment holds even for all the efforts to find ways to link this historical Jesus and christology. Some like James M. Robinson have sought a "concept of existence" in Jesus' sayings which parallels that found in the kerygma²². Bultmann himself warned against the dangers in seeking a second avenue of access to Jesus²³. Others have followed the approach of "implicit/explicit christology" - what was implicit in Jesus' words and actions before Easter, the community made explicit afterwards²⁴. Thus, for example, Jesus' action of receiving sinners and eating with them would point to the explicit assertion about justification by grace in the letters of Paul. Others saw the continuity in the call for faith: Jesus called for faith in God; the kerygma later called for faith in Jesus; the continuity lies in such trusting belief, and so *die Sache Jesu* goes on²⁵.

In such ways, the new quest sought to bring the historical Jesus and subsequent gospel christology closer together, but for our purposes it must be understood that there is little or no tendency in any of these efforts to allow the gospels' own christology to stand as that of Jesus during his lifetime, let alone to allow the sort of Chalcedonian formula reiterated in the Confessio Augustana to be true of Jesus' own self-understanding.

The current situation has been borne home to me in preparing a survey for the 100th anniversary volumes of the Society of Biblical Literature on "Jesus and Christology" since the Second World War²⁶. Note well the title assigned, "Jesus and Christology". It is indicative of several books in the last three decades: Jesus and the Servant, Jesus and the Son of Man, even Jesus and his coming²⁷. In each case

it was assumed there was a Servant-of-God or Son-of-man or parousia concept, and then the authentic logia were searched to see if Jesus really taught such a view. The conclusion usually has been that he did not. Now the unexpected turn has been that we have increasingly come to question also whether there was a "Servant-concept" or "apocalyptic Son of man" in Judaism²⁸, and the conclusion seems to be that the "concept" arose only *after* Easter in the early church.

Were the ghosts of Albert Schweitzer or C.H. Dodd among us today they would warn that this is what happens when Jesus is made into a cipher or unheroic figure, instead of a dynamic, creative personality²⁹. But the present state of *Leben-Jesu Forschung* is precisely, I submit (in spite of Gustav Aulén's recent attempt³⁰ to find convergence in a limited number of researchers) to point to a human figure about whom we can say only very little (though we can deny certain extreme views, such as that he never lived) and to whom we allow little or no christology on Jesus' part.

4. If this is not too negative a picture of biblical interpretation today regarding Jesus and christology - a change since 1530 which cuts across all confessional lines - then there are *implications and questions*:

a) If, in our hierarchy of authorities, we place Scripture over the ancient creeds and Reformation confessions, then is not *the New Testament* picture of Jesus and christology *normative* over the later developments? But *do we not actually concede* in this case a superior place to *post-biblical development* as *proper, higher, and irreversible*?

b) In the New Testament picture, *is it "Jesus and christology" as the canonical documents set it forth* (so that the historical Jesus said everything the fourth gospel presents as coming from the mouth of Jesus) *or as we, in the light of historical study, see Jesus and the origins of christology?* How much freedom can a modern adherent of CA III allow to critical studies of the gospels here?

c) If we decide we must hold to what *the texts* say and not what critics reconstruct on Jesus and christology, then we are still not without *problems* on so simple a matter as the very title of CA III: for *when* did Jesus become "Son of

God" according to the Scriptures?

The confessions surely mean to say he always was, as the Word, even before he took man's nature in Mary's womb. But according to Acts 13:33 and Romans 1:4 Jesus became or was designated Son by his *resurrection* from the dead. According to Mark 9:7 he was declared Son at the *transfiguration*, but 1:11 and parallels allow he was adopted as Son at his *baptism*. As is well known, Luke 1:35 traces his sonship back to the *virginal conception*. John 1:1-18 has him Son (1:18) and Word from "the beginning" with God, but Acts 3:20-21 hints that who and what Jesus is to be will come about only at his *parousia*.

Here we have the biblical evidence: Jesus is said to become God's Son only in the future, at the *parousia*; *or* he has become such at his resurrection; *or* he became so during his ministry, at one moment or another, or at birth; *or* he was so from the beginning. These various biblical views were homogenized by later thought. Must we take the highest denominator and retroactively judge each other christological position accordingly, or can we allow a place to each in a history of development, each useful in a particular situation - some of which, or none of which, may be ours today?

d) The *tendency* in modern biblical studies to *claim* the historical Jesus did not say this or that which is attributed to him wreaks all sorts of *havoc* with what our forefathers assumed to be *gospel truth*. They would say Jesus instituted baptism, the Lord's Supper, or the ministry, without much doubt that it was Jesus who did that during his days on earth. At times we may rejoice that they were discretely oblique, as when they write, "God instituted the office of the ministry" (CA IV), and we are not told when. But there is simply a difference between what they and most ancients attributed to Jesus' earthly ministry and the views of modern biblical scholarship.

e) Fresh contributions to christology in 1530 or thereafter are scarcely to be expected, for so much had already been said and decided. However, it has sometimes been claimed that the particular *Lutheran contribution* in the realm of christology came in the 19th century with the *kenosis theory*³¹, as an effort to explain how the emerging historical-critical view about Jesus as simply a Jewish

prophet and teacher could be squared with the inherited dogma that he was Son of God from all eternity. It was explained that he had "emptied himself" (*heauton ekenosen*, Phil. 2:7) of all those powers and prerogatives in becoming man.

But there is a further possibility for speaking of a Lutheran contribution to christology around 1530 in Luther's emphasis on *the humanity of Jesus*, to which allusion has already been made. Jesus was for Luther "the Man" through whom we know what God is really like, the *Ausbund*, to use a mercantile expression, "the faultless sample bound to the outside of a bolt of cloth to indicate the quality of merchandise within"³². By such emphases Luther may be said to have played a role in the shift from the inherited view of "a heavenly figure coming to earth" to the view which prevailed in the quest of "a man from Nazareth" with whom we begin in christology.

The current name for this emphasis is "christology *from below*", and in Walter Kasper and others we have illustration of current interest in the theme³³. With *Christologie von unten* the Reformation may be said to have set in motion a theme bearing fruit nowadays as it coincides with historical-critical studies.

f) By and large, on christology we Lutherans have tended, in the *Confessio Augustana* and elsewhere, to follow *the Catholic tradition*, both *Frühkatholizismus* and late Catholicism. But why not on "church" and "office" too (as the Anglican New Testament scholar Reginald Fuller has asked), for the canon of Scripture gives a toehold also to "orders of ministry" and an "institutionalized church" as in the *Pastorals* and *Luke-Acts*³⁴. We have followed the fourth gospel in its high christology, but why not also, as a Roman Catholic biblical scholar, Raymond E. Brown, asked of his own tradition (but it is applicable to ours as well), follow John in ecclesiology, which involves a "low" view, of community almost as conventicle, with little structure and no hierarchy, perhaps even with no ordained ministry³⁵?

Another way to ask this sort of question is this: What if we had to *choose between the christology of CA III and the soteriology of CA IV on a biblical basis*? Could our choice be anything but for the functional assertion, on which the church stands or falls, that we are "freely justified for Christ's sake through faith", as over against ontological assertion about the "two natures" of the "one Christ"³⁶?

II. JUSTIFICATION

We turn now to a case involving a more particularly Lutheran proprium, thrust to the fore by the *Confessio Augustana* in Article IV. With its brief assertion on justification, the CA is moving from the safe harbor of agreed ancient formularies to the heart of the gospel as seen by Luther, and thus to the then current and modern controversies. We are dealing here with a case where modern biblical interpretation raises questions more especially for Lutherans because of our insistence on the uniqueness of this theme for expressing the faith which the church's ministers proclaim (CA V) and for summing up what the Son of God (CA III) means for us in the face of our sin (CA II).

Justification has long been called the "article on which the church stands or falls". In more recent times, just as many New Testament scholars, Lutherans included, have decided that it is not the sole or central theme, even in Paul; some theologians are vigorously reasserting its prominence for Lutheran identity and for the ecumenical scene. I refer in particular to the stance, articulated well by Gritsch and Jenson but found more widely, that Lutheranism (note the term) is not so much a church or denomination, but a movement within the church catholic which perpetually proposes a single great dogma, indeed a metalinguistic dogma, by which all other dogmas shall be interpreted and judged, namely the proposal of "justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law"³⁷.

Before we examine righteousness/justification in biblical interpretation, we must look at how the theme came into the obvious prominence it has in Article IV of the *Confessio Augustana*. Of course, *iustificatio* had a long prior history and was not unimportant in medieval theology. For Luther it leaped to prominence in his personal struggle with Romans 1:17 and in his *Turmerlebnis* some 12 to 22 years before 1530.

1. Justification in CA IV and its Immediate Background

We begin with the observation that Luther managed to write the Large and Small Catechisms of 1529 (which have defined Lutheranism above all for lay people) without much reference to justification terminology. Cf., however, the apparently

ethical sense in the explanation to the second article of the Apostles' Creed³⁸.

We turn next to the sources which lie directly behind the *Confessio Augustana*. In the Marburg Articles (5, 6, and 7) of October 4, 1529, and Article V of the Schwabach Articles, from the summer of 1529, the emphasis seems to be on our faith as righteousness, rather than on a *justitia dei* or righteousness as an action of God³⁹.

The Torgau Articles (March 1530) stress grace and the forgiveness of sins, citing Galatians 2 and Romans 3⁴⁰. The "Instruction of the Visitation Commissioners to the Pastors of the Electorate of Saxony, March 1528", claims that preachers were not making clear the manner in which we attain "the faith which justifies"⁴¹.

When we compare the development of the article in the versions of May 31, 1530, June 15, June 25, and the German *editio princeps* of 1530-1531⁴², the four versions grow successively longer. And if we add consideration of the Apology, the exposition has grown to about a third of the Apology.

The *Bekennnisschriften* edition⁴³ cites in particular Article V from the May 31 version on justification before God by faith, by which we receive the Holy Spirit, citing Galatians 3:14 about "the promise of the Spirit through faith".

Finally, we must mention Luther's confession of March 1528, which we are told was an influence on Melancthon as he drafted the *Confessio Augustana*. There are remarkably few references here to justification⁴⁴. The most detailed one comes in Luther's Trinitarian framework, *after* the third article about the Holy Ghost. Justification is there associated with reconciliation and sanctification and the work of the Spirit⁴⁵.

Perhaps also Luther's writings c. 1529 on Romans should be kept in mind: his *Annotationes in Epistolam ad Romanos* and *Dispositio orationis in epistolam ad Romanos*, whence comes specifically the reference in CA IV to Romans 3 and 4⁴⁶.

From study of these passages, we may now make our observations and raise

questions about the construction of CA IV, the article of which later Lutheranism was to make so much.

a) Presumably *Melanchthon* in drafting the *Confessio Augustana* would not himself have made justification so prominent. It was Luther who was responsible for the stress upon it, and Luther who later declared it the article which cannot be compromised or given up (*Smalcald Articles*, II 1:1, 1:5). It has been argued that Master Philip, *der Leisetreter*, was toning down Article IV when he introduced it, "Our churches *also* teach that persons cannot be justified before God by their own strength"⁴⁷, preceded it, in the style of ancient rhetoricians, by more palatable content, and followed it by more controversial articles.

If such prominence for justification was not the chief drafter's personal agenda, *whence, then, does the prominence come?* First, from the source documents, but these are especially from Luther, and secondly from the Epistle to the Romans, but again in Luther's exposition.

We must therefore ask in all honesty *whether CA IV has not thus maximalized Luther's personal experience and particular form of rediscovery of the gospel.* For the dogma of the Christian faith, have we perhaps been unduly led by one individual's spiritual experience?

b) Even so, one is surprised how, as presented in the source documents and CA IV, *justificatio stresses not so much an action of God or attribute of his as it does faith on our part counted by God as righteousness*, and hence it is "the faith that blots out sin". Living in righteousness is more prominent than we might expect, God's saving righteousness less so.

c) One is struck how frequently in CA IV and its background documents there appear *alternative expressions* like "reconciliation" (*Luther's Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, 1528), "forgiveness" (CA IV, Latin), "eternal life" (CA IV, German), and above all the work of the Spirit (end of CA III). Indeed, *Melanchthon* in CA IV has combined two articles from the May 31 version of 1530 so as to bring together justification and the Spirit, as they are combined in *Galatians* 3:2-5, 14, in a new sequence⁴⁸.

Melanchthon's redactorial work thus "combined justification and salvation in a more pronounced way than Luther" had in 1528, "related them to Christ's work of reconciliation", and spoke of the Spirit as part of the work of justification; "we find in Articles 5 and 6 the first attempt to express the events of justification and sanctification in theological terms taken from Paul"⁴⁹. No small achievement for a pussyfooting redactor, but not without difficulties, as Wilhelm Maurer goes on:

By concluding Article III with a reference to the Spirit in the context of ascension and elevation, Melanchthon has blurred the connection of justification with the resurrection. The structure misses what Markus Barth has written of as *Acquittal by Resurrection*⁵⁰.

The prominence given to the Spirit in 1528 by Luther and indeed by CA III is, nonetheless, also blunted by Melanchthon, for christology dominates pneumatology. Maurer feels this is a step backwards. Exegetically, though there is debate, I would say Melanchthon is here authentically Pauline⁵¹.

The surprising thing overall to me, in looking at the development and content of what for us is *the* article in the Confessio Augustana, is the *inchoateness* and *fluidity* of the theme. It is a doctrine *in process of development*. The Confessio Augustana does not define or lock into place what justification is as fully and carefully as has been supposed. Indeed, one might ask whether it even is simply *an example* of what the gospel is, *perhaps even the example* or way to put it *for the Reformers in 1530*, but *not the only way*. Asking our question another way, has the very heading *De iustificatione* magnified one element in Article IV at the expense of the full sweep of ideas in CA IV? Article IV might be captioned *De fide, die Lehre vom Glauben*, which Article XX calls "the chief teaching in the church".

We could also look at the actual use of Scripture in CA IV or, because the evidence is fuller there, in the Apology. The latter task has already been done by Jürgen Roloff for Apology IV, with ample indications of where Melanchthon's exegesis has been led astray by the questions he is facing⁵². Note also Ragnar Bring's conclusion that for so crucial a point as use of Romans 7, Melanchthon's

doctrine of justification has an "egocentric" starting point"⁵³. Instead, we shall start from what recent biblical studies have been saying about justification/righteousness in Paul and elsewhere.

2. The Pauline Concept of *Dikaioyne*

Whereas CA IV uses the verb *iustificare* twice and a noun just once ("This faith God imputes for righteousness [*justitia*] in his sight"), the Pauline corpus employs the noun 57 times and the verb *dikaioo* 27, the vast majority of these occurrences being in Romans (33 and 15 respectively). The history of scholarly and theological interpretation is so complex that one recent writer declares, "no agreement has been reached.... And one wonders whether anything approaching a consensus can ever be reached."⁵⁴ But we do not lack for surveys of research⁵⁵.

A great deal depends on whether one begins with "righteousness" as a general concept or with *dikaioyne theou*; with the noun or the verb; which background one assumes, Greek, as "distributive justice", or Old Testament-Jewish, or specifically apocalyptic; and even which Pauline passages one takes as normative for the apostle.

a) We may highlight the history of interpretation as follows:

i) *Prior to the Reformation*, the dominant patristic interpretation, especially for the Latin fathers apart from Augustine, was that of *iustitia distributiva*, God's equanimity or impartiality (*aequitas*), the notion that he is a "Judge who judges righteously, not haphazardly but according to the norm of his own holiness and perfection"⁵⁶. On this basis, the meaning for Romans 1:17 which the young Luther met with was "bad news".

With Augustine came an alternative view: God's righteousness is God's gift of righteousness, of faith which justifies, or of grace itself. Some Greek fathers also held this view⁵⁷.

ii) *Luther* represented a breakthrough. Righteousness is a gift. The Greek genitive *tou theou* is not a subjective genitive denoting a property of God the Judge,

but an objective genitive, the righteousness which matters before God and which God gives, *justitia aliena*. It is really a gracious, powerful, redemptive activity on God's part on behalf of humans⁵⁸.

iii) *Melanchthon* transmitted Luther's emphasis within the context of *propter Christum* and the imputation theme, so that, in Anselmic terms, God's action consists of his gracious *will* to accept the sacrifice of Christ and thus reckon sinners with faith in Christ to be righteous. CA IV in its sequence and emphasis thus compromised some of Luther's dynamic rediscovery of Paul, but surely the imputation-language and Anselmic overtones could be expected to soothe Roman ears. Karl Holl thought that Melanchthon had thus ruined the Reformation view of justification, Maurer that he had let it come to full expression⁵⁹. Stuhlmacher judges his work a step backwards, and the start of the leveling process of Luther's dynamism by Lutheran orthodoxy⁶⁰.

iv) We skip over details about orthodoxy, as well as rationalism's scornful ignoring of Paul and of justification, and likewise we omit the ethical-idealistic interpretation of Liberalism in the 19th century, in part because these are simply not options among many exegetes today. It was, we may note, however, in the late 19th century that the most vehement opposition arose to Paul and to his doctrine of justification (and therefore to CA IV and any Lutheran "proposal"). For example, the anti-semitic Paul de Lagarde wrote in 1873: "The doctrine of justification is not the gospel, but a Pauline invention, born out of Paul's Jewish spirit"⁶¹.

Albert Schweitzer, who introduced eschatology more fully into the picture of Pauline studies, spoke more calmly but with equal feeling against justification when he called it "just a fragment of the doctrine of redemption" and labeled it but a subsidiary crater next to the volcanic central peak in Paul's thought, the theme of being mystically "in Christ"⁶². There was an element of truth in Lagarde, for he sensed what Hermann Cremer better showed, that Paul's view is to be interpreted against an Old Testament-Jewish background, in light of *zedekah* as a rational term⁶³. Cremer's studies were a landmark in research.

v) *In the 20th century* we have had a powerful but individualistic interpretation

of justification seen anthropologically, by Bultmann, as God-given, God-adjudicated righteousness which transforms our situation but not our essence⁶⁴. There has been debate over the genitive, with many taking *tu theou* as a subjective genitive, designating a quality or activity of the living God, and others as a "genitive of the author" (*genitivus auctoris*) or genitive of origin - righteousness which comes from God, is given to man, and forms the basis of his relationship with God⁶⁵.

vi) A major voice belongs to that maverick scholar Adolf Schlatter, who in 1935, at age 83, published a different view on *Gottes Gerechtigkeit*, which he claimed was the theme for the entire Epistle to the Romans. For Schlatter, the genitive denotes that righteousness belongs to God, as in Romans 3:5. It is further related to creation, as God's creative deed, as the power that creates all *Recht*. *Dikaioyne* is the completion of God's *Recht* as judgment and salvation. In this more theocentric view, which also enabled Schlatter to integrate chapters 9-11 into his treatment of Romans, we have a knowing departure from what had been the Lutheran consensus since CA IV; as Schlatter put it in the foreword to his first edition: "For Luther, Romans was a revelation, and this was the intent of Paul when he wrote it. But soon a shadow fell over the letter again, a shadow already announced in the Augsburg Confession. Out of what Paul had said, there arose 'das richtig gelehrte Evangelium'. Paul said of the message of Jesus, it saves with God's power everyone who believes. Luther put it into German thus: 'Das Evangelium von Christo ist eine Kraft Gottes die da selig macht alle die *daran* glauben.' *Daran* - *woran*? I think it is time we ponder this."⁶⁶

It is based on Schlatter and his work that Schlink asks: "Is the criticism justified that, in Lutheran doctrine, faith is not created through an act of God, but is related to a doctrine of justification revealed by God?"⁶⁷ More specifically, does the Lutheran understanding of *dikaioyne theou* as an objective genitive, *die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt*, really fit Romans 3:21 and 25-26, or 1:17, or is it a *genitivus subjectivus* and/or *auctoris* for the "judging-saving action of God"⁶⁸?

vii) As is well known, Ernst Käsemann and his pupils have moved the interpretation of *dikaioyne tu theou* into further paths: The term for them is a technical one from Jewish apocalyptic, where it referred not to an anthropologically-oriented gift but a theocentrically-oriented concept of God's redemptive action, specifically as

faithfulness to his covenant. It is characterized by its character as power (*Machtcharakter der Gabe*), power which transforms existence (*Existenzwandel*) and brings about the new creation via a "change in lordship" (*Herrenschafswechsel*); there is no gap between being "declared righteous" and being "made righteous"⁶⁹. Finally, on this view, this power of God-in-action affects the whole creation, not just isolated individuals; indeed it involves Yahweh's loyalty to his whole creation, keeping covenant with it. With this interpretation, Käsemann, Müller, and Stuhlmacher have removed the old charges against justification as a paper fiction, affecting individuals only. It is also cosmic-universal.

Needless to say, there are questions about the approach, but it is ecumenically significant that the Roman Catholic Karl Kertelge's monograph on the theme comes out very close at many points to the Käsemann view⁷⁰.

viii) In 1972 J.A. Ziesler called attention to the fact that Roman Catholic interpretation since Trent has tended to take up the verb *dikaioo* in light of the noun *dikaiosisyne*, beginning with the noun as "justice" or "uprightness" in an ethical sense and then going on to claim that the verb includes both an acquittal for the sinner and a "real" making righteous of him in the ethical sense. The verb then includes moral regeneration or sanctification; one can thus even speak of an "increase" of this justification because it is "a process as well as an act"⁷¹.

The Reformation line of thought, on the other hand, preferred to begin with the verb, taking *dikaioo* as "declare righteous", forensically, and then interpreted the noun as "real righteousness which comes from God to man but *for forensic purposes only*". God treats the person as if righteous. Here righteousness and justification are the same thing, an undeserved status before God, but they are not directly concerned with ethics, though there are consequences for it. Sanctification then emerges as a further issue here.

Ziesler, after studying both the verb and the noun, as well as the adjective, attempted his own way out of the impasse, concluding that the verb "justify" is used relationally, with the forensic sense of "acquit" (so traditional Protestantism is right), but the noun and the adjective *dikaios* have behavioral

meanings (so the Catholic concern for ethical seriousness is met too). Thus Paul's doctrine means that Christians are both justified by faith (restored to fellowship, acquitted) and also are righteous by faith (i.e., leading to a new life in Christ). The evaluation by reviewers of Ziesler's work concludes that both noun and verb must be studied, and we may not simply transfer findings from the one to the other, but that Ziesler has differentiated too sharply and is wrong to claim some passages make justification depend on our righteousness in Christ by faith⁷².

What is "the real Pauline view"? Good exegetes back each interpretation, and there is no consensus. Yet we must say the interpretative process has not been static since 1530. In fact, it has become positively exciting in the last 40 years. What Luther started has borne fruit in getting us back to Paul. But that is to acknowledge that Luther and CA IV are something of an initial effort at interpretation; that CA IV is somewhat limited compared with Luther; and that Luther is limited compared to the breadth of Paul as seen in recent exegesis. What is more, how Luther took a genitive need not be our sole solution any more. For neither the CA nor Luther represented a finished position on justification.

b) Is there something unique about Paul's theological stance? We must now refer to one more recent examination of Paul. E.P. Sanders has compared what he calls "the pattern of religion" in Paul with that in Palestinian Judaism⁷³. Sanders, incidentally, is among those who believe that "righteousness by faith" is inadequate to indicate the center of Pauline theology and would prefer "eschatological participation" as the central theme, "God's saving action and how hearers participate in that action"⁷⁴. The principal word for such participation Sanders finds in "faith" or "believing", and he holds that to be "saved by faith" was something "completely common in early Christianity". What Paul's original contribution was "lies in the antithetical formulation: by faith *and not by works of law*"⁷⁵.

What seems most important to me is Sanders's overall conclusion that Paul's "pattern of religion" was essentially *different* from any type of religiousness found in Palestinian Jewish literature and its "covenantal nomism". A "change of systems" from law to "participationalist eschatology" has taken place⁷⁶. But, Sanders adds, Paul's view could not be maintained. "Christianity rapidly became a new covenantal nomism"⁷⁷. Dare we add, till Luther; and then only for a time then,

and at times since, has the Pauline gospel broken through, opposing all nomistic systems - though such is the intent of the Reformation and CA IV - to champion such a "pattern of religion" consistently.

3. The Fuller Biblical Picture and the Real Problems over Justification

The real problems which any proposal about justification as *the* expression of the gospel for all Christendom faces are well known. We can indicate them here only in outline, for reasons of space, and cannot begin to suggest such answers as exist, though a general line of approach will emerge in the conclusions.

a) *Is justification the central theme in Paul?* There are significant voices (e.g., Schweitzer, Stendahl) which deny, on an exegetical basis, that it is⁷⁸. They claim, for example, that *dikaioyne* emerges as a theme only in two late epistles, Galatians and Romans, and then only in a polemical situation. The argument may, however, be countered by appeal to the likelihood that justification/righteousness was already a key theme in pre-Pauline (Jewish) Christianity (cf. the formulas at Romans 3:24-26 and 4:24-25)⁷⁹.

However, there are numerous alternatives to justification as a (or the) central theme in Paul, for example, 1. the *en-Christo* theme, interpreted either mystically or ecclesiastically; 2. reconciliation, as adopted in the Presbyterian Confession of 1967; 3. *Heilsgeschichte* (Munch, Stendahl, for example); 4. such emphases as "freedom, redemption, liberation", the covenant, expiation, simply "Christ", or "the lordship of Jesus"⁸⁰. A case can be made for each. Paul's gospel seems many-sided, and its chief motifs interchange.

b) *Are there grounds for applying this Pauline theme of justification to other parts of the Bible* as standard and norm, without distorting what they seek to say? Crux cases involve James (especially 2:14-26) and Matthew (where "righteousness" is used redactorially in a totally different way from Paul)⁸¹. Further problem cases exist in the different nuances of meaning in Luke-Acts, John, Isaiah, and the Psalms, and above all with those many biblical writers who do not use the terminology or reflect the theme at all. Do we cross off so much of

Scripture as not being amenable to our proposal about what the gospel is? Or do we mark it simply as "law" in contrast to the Pauline gospel⁸²?

4. Some Modest Conclusions on Righteousness/Justification

a) *Justification by grace through faith is a central way of putting the good news in Paul, but not the only one.* In its favor are the facts that it roots in the Old Testament, was a common pre-Pauline Christian theme, and was brought to new heights by Paul in key situations. Furthermore, when Paul does speak of the good news in some other terms, like reconciliation, he reverts to justification terminology anyway (cf. Romans 5:10-11 with 5:9 and 16-17, or Corinthians 5:18-20 with 5:21).

Justification is thus *the gospel paradigm*, by which other ways of putting the good news must be measured. But a paradigm implies other examples in the same class will function like it in presenting the good news.

b) *We must beware of "Paulinizing" the rest of Scripture* as if this were the only way to express the gospel. But the gospel must always be what justification seeks to express.

c) *We ought to be careful and not triumphalistic about maximalizing one Reformer's experience and particular preference for stating the gospel*, even in CA IV, at the expense of other scriptural assertions of the good news.

d) *CA IV is a proposal still to be worked out in its fulness* as to what justification was for Paul and can mean for us.

e) *We would therefore better describe Lutheranism - a movement⁸³ in the western church in 1530, today a church or churches spread over much of the world - as embracing those who propose the gospel as central, and justification as the gospel paradigm, but not its only expression.*

III. BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND THE CA: TOWARD CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

Other examples might profitably be discussed of articles in the *Confessio Augustana* and the results of modern scriptural scholarship, both where questions may be raised about what the Augsburg Confession states and where the CA (which is by no means, and need not be, a complete biblical theology, even for the Pauline letters) overlooks basic themes⁸⁴.

The great strength of the *Confessio Augustana*, hermeneutically, as a tool, for ecumenical dialog, in the Third World, and for whatever forms our future theologizing and confessing takes, lies in its appeal to Scripture in light of the gospel (put in terms of justification) as central for understanding the Bible. The very sequence of its articles suggests a way of "doing theology" or at least stating it, akin to Paul's most fulsome epistle, Romans: namely, God, the human plight, Christ, gospel (cf. 1:16-3:28), ministry (10:14-17), the response of believers (12:1 ff.), and current problems of the church in the world.

Thus, we are called back to Scripture, interpreted in light of the gospel. Nowadays, interpretation inevitably uses the historical approach (in understanding the *Confessio Augustana* as well as the books of the Bible), but the interpretation to which we are called must not only assume and use modern historical-critical methods, but also reserve the right to be theologically critical of these methods⁸⁵.

The scandal lies in the fact of how little of this work involving Scripture and confessions has been done. When I accepted this assignment, I assumed my chief task would be to work through an extensive literature by Lutherans on biblical exegesis reflecting the *Confessio Augustana*. The surprise was how little exists of such literature⁸⁶. One fears that for a century or two Lutherans simply assumed the exegesis they presumed in the *Confessio Augustana* was correct; since then there has arisen a kind of divorce between the biblical and the systematic-confessional theologians, so that they scarcely talk to each other on such matters. There is therefore a desperate need to work cooperatively together, lest we have (as we may already, in many quarters) confessions without biblical

exegesis and Scripture scholarship without confessions.

In the Third World, appeal to confessions, even to the *Confessio Augustana*, will carry little weight with other Christians without biblical grounding for the Augsburg Confession. In Roman Catholic dialog, while there may be a chance that the *Confessio Augustana* will be listed as yet another document in Denzinger-Schönmetzer, our *rapprochement* will ultimately depend on appeal to the New Testament and its gospel.

The anniversary year of 1980 is a suitable time to let the dialog among ourselves begin afresh between the *Confessio Augustana* and the Scriptures to which it appeals as we seek to understand them both better today.

NOTES

1. Cf. Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J.A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), pp. 297-299.
2. Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*, trans. J.A. Baker (London: A. & C. Black / Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 333. The situation with the Old Testament Apocrypha is no longer so simple as was formerly supposed, nor has Luther's New Testament "canon within the canon" been widely accepted.
3. Cf. Eduard Schweizer's famous comment in *The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament*, trans. James M. Davis (Facet Books Biblical Series 18; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 34: If confronted in the early church by the question at Marburg about "elements", the Palestinian Christian "would have given a 'Reformed' answer, 'the bread signifies the body', and the Hellenist a 'Lutheran' answer, 'the bread is the body'."
4. Cf. *Sola Scriptura? Ringvorlesungen der Theologischen Fakultät der Philipps-Universität, Marburg*, ed. Carl-Heinz Ratschow (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1977).
5. Cf. CA III, "vere passus", "wahrhaftig geboren, wahrhaftig ... auferstanden", with Ignatius, *Trallians* 9 ("truly was born ..., truly was persecuted ..., truly was crucified ..., truly was raised").

6. Eric W. Gritsch/Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 100-101, 103.
7. Cf. Walther Köhler, *Wie Luther den Deutschen das Leben Jesu erzählt hat* (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte, Vol. 35, 1-2, No. 127-218; Leipzig: Verein für Reformationsgeschichte [Rudolf Haupt Verlag], 1917, 2nd ed. 1934).
8. On "pillar passages" for a "truly scientific" life of Christ, see Paul W. Schmiedel, "Gospels", *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, ed. T.K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black (London: A. & C. Black, 1898), Vol. 2, cols. 1881-1882; separately reprinted, 1908. Criteria, e.g., in Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM Press / New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 37-47.
9. Wilhelm Bousset, *Jesus*, trans. Janet Penrose Trevelyan (London: Williams & Norgate / New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1906); *idem*, *Kyrios Christos*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1970).
10. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 14; *idem*, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 3.
11. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black, 1910 / New York: Macmillan 1945), pp. 330-397. Schweitzer's heroic, dogmatic Jesus had been outlined, within the framework of a theory of origins for the Lord's Supper, in *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*, trans. Walter Lowrie (London: A. & C. Black / New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1914). William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. James C.G. Grieg (Cambridge/London: James Clarke & Co., 1971 / Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1972).
12. Charles Guignebert, *Jesus*, trans. S.H. Hooke (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. / New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1935).
13. Thomas W. Manson, "The Life of Jesus: Some Tendencies in Present-Day Research", *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: Essays in Honour of C.H. Dodd*, ed. W.D. Davies and D. Daube (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p. 216.
14. Norman Perrin, "The Wredestrasse becomes the Hauptstrasse: Reflections on the Reprinting of the Dodd Festschrift", *Journal of Religion*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1966, pp. 296-300.

15. E.g., Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity*, trans. Harold Knight and George Ogg (New York: World Publishing Company / London: Lutterworth Press, 1969); Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons / London: Lutterworth Press, 1965).
16. Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus", *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W.J. Montague (Studies in Biblical Theology 41; London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 15-47.
17. Joachim Jeremias, "Characteristics of the *ipsissima vox Jesu*", *The Prayers of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series, 6; London: SCM Press, 1967; reprinted, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 108-115. Ethelbert Stauffer, "Geschichte Jesu", *Historia Mundi*, Vol. IV (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1956), pp. 129-189; *idem*, *Jesus and His Story*, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (London: SCM Press, 1960); trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1960).
18. Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 226-231.
19. Ernst Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom: A Polemical Survey of the New Testament*, trans. Frank Clarke (London: SCM Press, 1969 / Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). Cf. his "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy", *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W.J. Montague (London: SCM Press / Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), pp. 23-65.
20. Hans Conzelmann, "Jesus Christus" in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd ed., Vol. 3 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1959), cols. 619-653; English translation by J. Raymond Lord, *Jesus*, ed. with introduction and bibliography to 1972 by J. Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973).
21. Herbert Braun, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Man and His Time*, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).
22. James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Studies in Biblical Theology 25; London: SCM Press, 1959; reprinted, Missoula, Mont.: Scholars' Press, 1979), especially pp. 93-125; *idem*, "The Formal Structure of Jesus' Message", *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon Snyder (New York: Harper & Row / London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 91-110.
23. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus", *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. and ed. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (Nashville: Abingdon

Press, 1964), pp. 15-42.

24. Cf. Conzelmann (see n. 20), *RGG*³, Vol. 3, cols. 633, 649-651; *Jesus*, pp. 49-50, 93-96. Further, Jürgen Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesus: Historische Motive in den Jesus-Erzählungen der Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).
25. Gerhard Ebeling, "Jesus and Faith", *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press / London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 201-246. Willi Marxsen, *The Beginnings of Christology: A Study in its Problems*, trans. Paul J. Achtemeier (Facet Books Biblical Series 22; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969; new ed. 1979); *idem*, *Die Sache Jesu geht weiter* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976).
26. Forthcoming in *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters*, ed. George MacRae and Eldon J. Epp (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars' Press / Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).
27. Morna Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Conception of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1959). A.J.B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press / London: Lutterworth Press, 1964). John A.T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming: The Emergence of a Doctrine* (London: SCM Press, 1957).
28. Ragner Leivestad, "Der apokalyptische Menschensohn: Ein theologisches Phantom", *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* (Jerusalem), Vol. 6, 1968, pp. 49-105; *idem*, "Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man", *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 18, 1972, pp. 243-267. The figure may be an invention of the German universities.
29. Cf. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (see n. 11), especially pp. 398-403; *idem*, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (see n. 11), p. 174. C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (London: James Nisbet & Co. / New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 109-110.
30. Gustaf Aulén, *Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research*, trans. Ingall H. Hjelm (Philadelphia: Fortress Press / London: SPCK, 1976).
31. E.g., in the work of Thomasius and others. P. Henry, "Kénose", *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* (Paris: 1950), fasc. 24, pp. 7-161. Eugene R. Fairweather, "The Kenotic Christology", in F.W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (London: A. & C. Black / New York: Harper & Row, 1959), pp. 159-174. Donald G. Dawe, *The Form of a Servant: A Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), esp. pp. 67-103. Claude Welch, *God and Incarnation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

32. Ian D. Kingston Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 86.
33. Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (London: Burns & Oates / New York: Paulist Press, 1976). Similarly among recent Catholic "lives", Dermot A. Lane, *The Reality of Jesus: An Essay in Christology* (Dublin: Veritas Publications / New York: Paulist Press, 1977); Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity: The Gospel of Liberation* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977; Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978).
34. So already in Reginald H. Fuller's *The New Testament in Current Study* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962; London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 85, 95, reflecting Käsemann on Luke-Acts; *idem*, "Apostolicity and Ministry", *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 1972, pp. 67-76, reprinted as "The Development of the Ministry" in *Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue* (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1973), pp. 76-93. "Early Catholicism in the New Testament", referred to there, has not appeared, but cf. Fuller's essay on New Testament theology in the forthcoming *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters* (see n. 26).
35. Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).
36. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "Paul's teaching on justification is, so one could say, his proper Christology", comparing Melancthon's "To know Christ is to know his benefits". "Die Christologie des Neuen Testaments", *Glauben und Verstehen I* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1933), p. 262, as cited in Dieter Lührmann, "Christologie und Rechtfertigung", *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Friedrich, W. Pöhlmann, and P. Stuhlmacher (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), p. 351. The original quotations read: "Die Rechtfertigungslehre des Paulus ist, so könnte man sagen, seine eigentliche Christologie, denn 'hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere'."
37. *Lutheranism* (see n. 6), pp. 42-43. By "metalinguistic" is meant a dogma stipulating what kind of talking shall be done in all talking and doctrine and life, so as to score the point "faith, not works". The report by the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, *Lutheran Identity: Final Report of the Study Project, "The Identity of the Lutheran Churches in the Context of the Challenges of our Times"* (1977) is a bit more nuanced in listing "God's justifying action in Jesus Christ as the essence of the message of salvation (gospel)" second after "God's loving condescension as the only way to salvation" in its list of "basic theological convictions of Lutheran identity" (pp. 16-18, esp. paras. 15-18 on problems and reservations).
38. Note how Luther also mixes New Testament theologies: "in order

that I may ... live under him [cf. *zāō* in the fourth gospel] in his kingdom [synoptics], and serve him in everlasting righteousness [Pauline, ethical sense]" (Small Catechism, Creed, Second Article).

39. For texts, see *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirchen* (8th ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), p. 57. In English: M. Reu, *The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources with An Historical Introduction* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930), pp. *45 and *41-42. One should work through the texts marking "faith" and "righteousness" references.
40. Reu, *ibid.*, p. *82 ("Of the Doctrines and Ordinances of Men"), and Henry E. Jacobs, *The Book of Concord*, Vol. II, *Historical Introduction, Appendixes and Indexes* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board, 1908), pp. 77-78 and 86 ("Of Faith and Works").
41. *Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 57; Reu, pp. *3-4.
42. Conveniently printed in parallel columns by Reu, pp. *170-173.
43. *Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 57 (cited as "Na").
44. *Luther's Works*, Vol. 37 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), pp. 360-372, and Reu, pp. *23-31. On the "lasting impression" and influence which Luther's personal witness of 1528, written as he feared approaching death, had on Melanchthon, cf. Wilhelm Maurer, "Melanchthon as Author of the Augsburg Confession", *Lutheran World*, Vol. VII, No. 2, 1960/1961, pp. 153-167, esp. pp. 156, 159-160, 167. Pertinent passages on justification occur in Reu, pp. *25-26 and in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 37, p. 366.
45. *Luther's Works*, Vol. 37, pp. 365-366; Reu, p. *28. Cf. Maurer, p. 160.
46. *Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 57, note 1; Vinzenz Pfnür, *Einig in der Rechtfertigungslehre? Die Rechtfertigungslehre der Confessio Augustana (1530) und die Stellungnahme der katholischen Kontroverstheologie zwischen 1530 und 1535* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1970), p. 108, note 648. Pfnür's analysis of CA IV, pp. 97-109, merits further study.
47. *Lutheranism* (see n. 6), p. 49. Maurer (see n. 44), p. 154, prefers to see Melanchthon as the "peacemaker" rather than as the "one who treads softly".
48. Pfnür (see n. 46), p. 106. Na, Articles 4 and 5 in *Bekenntnisschriften*, pp. 59 and 57, and in Reu, pp. *170, *172. Article 4 reads, it is taught "that the Holy Spirit is given through the means of the word and the sacraments, as Paul says: 'Faith

comes from hearing' [Rom. 10:17] Fifth, that we may not attain forgiveness of sins and justification before God through any of our works or satisfaction but we receive it free, totally gratis, as we believe that sins are forgiven to us through Christ and we are admitted to grace. For Christ has come into the world so that all who thus believe in him are not lost [John 3:16]. Through such faith in the gospel or promise of grace we receive the Holy Spirit, as Paul says in Galatians 3, so that we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

49. Maurer (see n. 44), p. 160.
50. *ibid.*, p. 164. Markus Barth and Verne H. Fletcher, *Acquittal by Resurrection* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), esp. pp. 85-96. Further Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1-3* (Anchor Bible Vol. 34; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 211-252.
51. Maurer, *ibid.*, p. 164; cf. Pfnür (see n. 46), p. 103. My claim is that for Paul the experience of the Spirit is also interpreted in terms of Christ crucified.
52. Jürgen Roloff, "The Interpretation of Scripture in Article IV of Melancthon's Apology of the Augsburg Confession", *Lutheran World*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1961, pp. 47-63.
53. Ragnar Bring, *Das Verhältnis von Glauben und Werken in der lutherischen Theologie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1955). Discussion of the use of Romans 7 in Lutheran theology and in contemporary exegesis is highly to be desired.
54. Manfred T. Brauch, "Perspectives on 'God's righteousness' in Recent German Discussion" in E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 254; similarly J.A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 20; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 14.
55. Christian Müller, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Gottes Volk: Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9-11* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 86; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 5-27, on *dikaio syne theou* from F.C. Baur to Bultmann. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), pp. 11-73, interpretation of *dikaio syne theou* from the second century till 1963. J.A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (see n. 54), pp. 1-16, on noun and verb from the Council of Trent till the present. Manfred T. Brauch, "Perspectives on 'God's Righteousness'" (see n. 54), pp. 523-542. Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer, 1. Teilband, Röm. 1-5* (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament VI/1; Zurich: Benzinger / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), pp. 223-233. Colin Brown

"Contemporary Interpretations of Righteousness" in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan / Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), pp. 371-377. Addition to article in *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1971).

56. Brauch (see n. 54), p. 525.
57. Stuhlmacher (see n. 55), p. 18.
58. Brauch (see n. 54), p. 525; Stuhlmacher (see n. 55), pp. 19-23; Wilckens (see n. 55), pp. 226-227.
59. Karl Holl, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewissheit Gottes", *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, I. Luther (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1923), p. 128 (originally in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* for 1910, pp. 245 ff.). Wilhelm Maurer, "Melanchthon" in *RGK*³ (see n. 20), Vol. 4, col. 839.
60. Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes* (see n. 55), p. 24; cf. Wilckens (see n. 55), p. 227.
61. Quoted in Karl Holl, *Die Rechtfertigungslehre im Licht der Geschichte des Protestantismus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2nd ed., 1922), p. 1, reprinted in Holl's *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, III. *Der Westen* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1928), p. 525, as cited in a paper by Gerhard O. Forde at the US Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, February 1979.
62. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black, 1931), pp. 220-221, 225.
63. Hermann Cremer, *Die paulinische Rechtfertigungslehre im Zusammenhange ihrer geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 2nd ed., 1900). Cf. Stuhlmacher (see n. 55), pp. 46-50.
64. Rudolf Bultmann, "Paul", *Twentieth Century Theology in the Making*: Vol. 1, *Themes of Biblical Theology*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (London: Collins Fontana Books / New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 169-214; reprinted from *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, selected, trans. and introduced by Schubert M. Ogden (New York: Meridian Books, Living Age Books, 1960), pp. 111-146, with the permission of Hodder & Stoughton, London, and The World Publishing Co., Cleveland/New York (also published in the Fontana Library [London: Collins, 1964], pp. 130-172). *Idem*, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 1 (see n. 10), pp. 270-285. *Idem*, "Dikaiosynē Theou", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 83, 1964, pp. 12-16.

65. Cf. Brauch (see n. 54), pp. 525-526.
66. Adolf Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1935), p. 7, cf. pp. 42-45. Schlatter's son wrote in the preface to the fourth edition that the commentary's aim was not criticism of Luther but to lead us forward to Paul and how he saw God's saving work.
67. Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* (see n. 1), p. 303, referring to Schlatter, pp. 42-43.
68. *ibid.*, p. 299, again citing Schlatter.
69. Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (see n. 19), pp. 168-182. For Müller and Stuhlmacher, see n. 55, above.
70. Karl Kertelge, 'Rechtfertigung' bei Paulus: Studien zur Struktur und zum Bedeutungsgehalt des paulinischen Rechtfertigungsbegriffs (Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen N:F.3; Münster: Aschendorff, 1967), but cf. his appendix on Stuhlmacher's dissertation.
71. Ziesler (see n. 55), p. 2, citing, for Trent, Session VI, vii (Denzinger-Schönmetzner 799) and VI, canon 24 (*ibid.*, 834); English translation of Denzinger-Schönmetzner by Roy J. Deferrari, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1957), pp. 251 and 260.
72. Ziesler, *ibid.*, pp. 147, 162-163, 212. Review article, N.M. Watson, "The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul ...", *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 20, 1973-1974, pp. 216-228.
73. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (see n. 54). On its significance, cf. the review by Nils A. Dahl in *Religious Studies Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1978, pp. 153-158.
74. Sanders, *ibid.*, pp. 438 and 447, cf. 549.
75. *ibid.*, pp. 438, 440, 444-445, 447, 506-507, 519.
76. *ibid.*, pp. 543-552.
77. *ibid.*, p. 552.
78. Albert Schweitzer, *Mysticism* (see n. 62), esp. pp. 220-221. K. Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West", *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 56, No. 3, 1963, pp. 199-215; most recently reprinted in his *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 78-96; but note there also pp. 23-40, "Justification Rather than Forgiveness", and pp. 129-132, where Stendahl denies he meant Paul's doctrine of justification was primarily polemical and regrets being forced to choose, as a Lutheran theologian, between justification and salvation history, his real interest for chapters 9-11 and Jewish relations. Cf. also Dan O. Via, Jr., "Justification and Deliverance: Existential Dialectic", *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1971, pp. 204-212.
79. Cf. J. Reumann and William Lazareth, *Righteousness and Society: Ecumenical Dialogue in a Revolutionary Age* (Philadelphia:

Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 19-28; Reumann, "The Gospel of the Righteousness of God", *Interpretation*, Vol. 20, 1966, pp. 432-452; Wilckens (see n. 55) and Kertelge (see n. 70) on the passages.

80. Compare the discussion of "dominant perspectives" in Joseph Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology", *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), Section 79, sub-sections 22-97. For "reconciliation", see Edward A. Dowey, Jr., *A Commentary on the Confession of 1967 and an Introduction to "The Book of Confessions"* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), esp. pp. 39-42; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments, Eine Hermeneutik* (Neues Testament Deutsch, Ergänzungsreihe 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979, pp. 225-247, for whom reconciliation is "die Mitte der Schrift" and "das Herzstück des Neuen Testaments" (p. 243); and Stuhlmacher and Helmut Class, *Das Evangelium von der Versöhnung in Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1979).
81. *Righteousness and Society* (see n. 79), pp. 79-86 and 67-71. Further literature cited there.
82. "Law and Gospel" is a major topic for further discussion.
83. The term is correctly used in, e.g., H.E. Jacobs, *The Lutheran Movement in England* (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1916), but already in 1530 Lutherans were saying, "Our churches teach ..." (CA I), though these are doubtless local congregations.
84. Cf. Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions* (see n. 1), pp. 300-317 (with reference to the Book of Concord as a whole).
85. Instructive here on issues and attitudes is the volume of essays from a common project by US Lutheran churches, *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics*, ed. John Reumann with S.H. Nafziger and H. Ditmanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).
86. The best examples may be papers for the old LWF Commission on Theology: cf. Jürgen Roloff on Apology IV (see n. 52) and *idem*, "The Question of the Church's Ministry in Our Generation", *Lutheran World*, Vol. XI, No. 4, 1964, pp. 389-408; and Leonhard Goppelt, "The Ministry in the Lutheran Confessions and in the New Testament", *ibid.*, pp. 409-426. Further, Eduard Lohse, "Das Amt, das die Versöhnung predigt", *Rechtfertigung* (see n. 36), pp. 339-349. Wilhelm Dantine, *Justification of the Ungodly*, trans. Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), might also be mentioned. The Holman Lectures on the Augsburg Confession at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pa., USA, since 1866, show little engagement with critical biblical studies, though note Howard Bream, on Article XVII in 1966, published in the Seminary *Bulletin*, Vol. 47, 1967, pp. 37-49.

SUTAN HUTAGALUNG

THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA AS A CONFESSION OF FAITH IN THE PRESENT HISTORICAL SETTING

Most Third World Christians will find it extremely difficult to understand the historical setting in which the Confessio Augustana came into existence. Many questions can be raised: How did it come about that the Augsburg Confession, which was first presented at an imperial diet (not a church council), signed by public officials (not by theologians), and addressed to an emperor (not to a pope or a church dignitary), became a confessional document uniting more than 70 million Lutherans throughout the world, including those in Asia and Africa who are separated from the 16th century European Reformation not only by a geographical or temporal gap, but, more important, by a large socio-cultural gap? What is the present-day significance of the Confessio Augustana, a 1530 document, for the different churches in Africa and Asia, many of which are small in number, weak in resources, faced with different social and political structures, and exist in the midst of non-Christian religions? Furthermore, these churches may be unfamiliar with some of the heresies mentioned in the Augsburg Confession, such as those of the Manichaeans, Valentinians, and Eunomians. And what about the Mohammedans (also mentioned in the CA) who are now in the majority in many African and Asian countries in which Lutherans live?

That the Lutheran confessional documents, and especially the Confessio Augustana and Luther's Small Catechism, have enriched the Lutheran churches of Africa and Asia has been acknowledged by church leaders. But the questions must be raised: In what ways have the Lutheran churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America enriched the meaning and interpretation of the Confessio Augustana? And how should this be achieved?

Of the 98 member churches in the LWF, there are 18 in Africa, 30 in Asia (including one in Jordania and two in Papua New Guinea), 8 in Latin America, 4 in North

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America, and 38 in Europe. Thus, almost half of the LWF member churches (i.e., 48) are in Africa and Asia. Fifty-six, or well over half, are in the so-called Third World - or AALA - countries (Africa, Asia, and Latin America).

This paper will deal with some of these questions as it discusses the Confessio Augustana as a confession of faith in the present historical setting of Lutheran churches in the Third world, particularly in Africa and Asia.

I. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA INTO THE COUNTRIES OF AFRICA, ASIA, AND LATIN AMERICA

Lutheran world missions in the modern sense arose comparatively late, i.e., toward the beginning of the 19th century, some 300 years after the Reformation.

The Pietists (including the Moravians) fostered missions which transcended confessional boundaries, and these often adopted the subjective tones of individuals rather than the voice of the churches. Some missionary societies founded in the beginning of the 19th century included both Lutheran and Reformed missionaries, for example, the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society (1815) and the Rhenish (Barmen) Missionary Society (1828). Six LWF member churches in Indonesia, comprising a total membership of more than 1,700,000, are the fruit of missions carried out by Ludwig Nommensen (1834-1918) of the Rhenish Missionary Society.

A more confessional approach began through the Danish (1821), Berlin (1824), and the Dresden (1836; Leipzig after 1848) missionary societies. The latter began work in Indonesia, but after Germany joined the circle of colonial powers Leipzig missionaries were also sent to eastern Africa. Other Lutheran missionary societies which have developed mission on a confessional basis are, for example, those of Hermannsburg (1848), Neuendettelsau (1841), and Schleswig-Holstein (1876).

Lutheran confessional doctrines spread to all parts of the world also through the work of other Scandinavian and North American missionary societies. With

the "planting" of churches in Asia and Africa, the Lutheran confessional writings - especially Luther's Small Catechism and later the Confessio Augustana - entered into the constitutions and lives of the younger churches. At present, most of these churches follow a doctrinal position which is identical to that of the "mother" churches in Europe and the USA - often without the knowledge of the majority of the members.

The confessional positions of several Lutheran churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as they are worded in their respective constitutions, are to be found in *The Church and the Confessions*¹.

AFRICA

With regard to the Confessio Augustana and Luther's Small Catechism, the constitutions of African Lutheran churches include the following positions: The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus calls them "a pure exposition of the Word of God"; the Malagasy Lutheran Church "a brief and true exposition of the Word of God" (corresponding to the Norwegian mother church); the Lutheran Church of Usambara-Digo "a clear exposition of the Word of God"; and the Lutheran Church of Usamaro-Uluguru "a true explanation of the Word of God"². (The two latter churches now form part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa, South-Eastern Region (a body formed by the merger of five synods and missions in July 1960) has a rather stern confessional attitude: The foundation on which this church stands is "the Word of God ...; the Creed of the Apostles, the Nicene and Athanasian Symbols and *the* pure Lutheran Doctrine in accordance with the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the other books of the Lutheran Concordia ... which we believe to be *the* correct exposition of the Word of God."³ This may be unique even within Lutheranism.

On the other hand, in 1953, the Council of Churches on Lutheran Foundation in Southern Africa (the forerunner to the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa and a body to which several Lutheran mission societies and their affiliated synods belonged) stated that its basis was "witness to Jesus Christ as the Living Word of God" and a fellowship of faith expressed "in the

common confession of the Small Catechism of Martin Luther"⁴. Then we also have the constitutions of the African and European churches and missionary societies in southern Africa which refer to the Book of Concord, the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, or even the Apostles' Creed and Luther's Small Catechism as their confessional documents⁵. Of course, all the churches profess the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed word of God and, therefore, the only source of faith, doctrine, and life.

How these churches interpret their constitutional statements in their life and teachings and in the encounter with their immediate problems is a central issue. A confession of faith must be a living expression by the church and its members. However, the report of the First All-Africa Lutheran Conference in Marangu, Tanzania (1955) stated that it believed many church members were not "too well acquainted with the teachings of the church, partly due to poor instruction in school and confirmation classes, but also because of the fact that the confessional books have as yet not been translated into all [many?] of the vernacular languages"⁶. Moreover, can the *Confessio Augustana* be correctly understood without some understanding of the socio-political situation of the 16th century?

Problems confronting the church in Africa include the ever-increasing sect movements, polygamy, advancing Islamic religions, and syncretism. The Marangu Conference felt that answers to these problems should be sought in the old confessions. "If there is no guidance or help to be found, then the African churches face the problem of adding new confessional statements"⁷. How could new confessional statements be incorporated into the present confessional books of the Lutheran church? The Marangu Conference gave the following tentative answer: "1. By adding new statements amplifying the old confessions. Nothing should be added to the Ecumenical Symbols or the *Augustana Invariata*; these will remain as a guide in the form in which we have inherited them. But additional confessional statements may easily be added to Luther's Small Catechism in the form of questions and answers which, in a clear and simple way, will clarify the new problems facing the church and its members. 2. A comprehensive confessional statement - *Confessio Africana* - may be worked out, not necessarily replacing the old confessions, but amplifying the Lutheran teachings in terms and in language which will be understood by the modern African."⁸

The drive toward a *Confessio Africana* can be seen as part of an indigenous confessional policy, but so far no such confession has been formulated. The importance of the Augsburg Confession, generally recognized as the decisive doctrinal authority in the Lutheran churches in Africa, can be seen from the above-quoted confessional positions. But the relationship between the acceptance of a formal doctrinal confession and the actual act of confessing remains a crucial problem. Another question which can be raised is whether the *Confessio Augustana* is accepted "in so far as" or "because" it is the correct exposition of the word of God. What hermeneutical keys would Lutheran churches use to interpret the Augsburg Confession and write a basic Lutheran statement of faith relevant to their situation?

ASIA

Heinrich Plütschau (in India 1706-1711) and Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (d. 1719 at Tranquebar) of the Danish-Halle Mission were the first European Lutheran missionaries in India and perhaps in the whole of Asia. Out of their work, with the help of the Leipzig Missionary Society, grew what has now become the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is interesting to note the instruction to which these two missionaries were bound: to "proclaim nothing but the holy doctrine as it is written in the Word of God and repeated in the Symbolic Books of these countries according to the Augsburg Confession, out there in East India, and to offer nothing besides"⁹.

It is a poor "joke" to say that the missionaries went to preach to the pagans with the Book of Concord or the *Confessio Augustana Invariata* under their arms. The first missionaries must have been fully occupied mastering the vernacular language, trying to understand the customs of the people, preaching the gospel, and providing catechetical material (among Lutherans, this almost always involved the translation of Luther's Small Catechism), order in worship, and hymns. I do not think that early missionaries were sent out to foreign fields because they were masters of the Lutheran confessions.

Ziegenbalg first translated Luther's Small Catechism into Tamil and then completed his translation of the New Testament on March 31, 1711. Not until the 150-year jubilee of their arrival in India (1856) was the *Confessio Augustana* put into

Tamil by H. Cordes, and it was 1933 before the Large Catechism appeared in that language. Today, there are nine LWF member churches in India. In conformity with their mother churches, they subscribe to the *Confessio Augustana*. But here, as in Africa, the *Confessio Augustana* is known more by name than by content¹⁰. (On the 1950 "Doctrinal Statement of the Lutheran Church in India", see p. 46 in this article.)

In general, we find the same pattern in the other 21 Asian Lutheran churches. The first translation of the Augsburg Confession into Japanese was published in Japan in 1900; it included only the first 21 articles, and a translation of all 28 articles did not appear until 1930. Luther's *Small Catechism* was translated in 1895.

The first Lutheran missionary to China was Karl F.A. Gützlaff (1803-1851), who, under Dutch Reformed auspices, began his work among the Chinese in Indonesia and first visited China in 1829. Next came missionaries from the Basel (1846), Rhenish (1847), and Berlin (1850) Missionary Societies, followed by various Scandinavian and North American societies and churches, including the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod¹¹. A common concern for indigenous leadership led to the founding of the Union Lutheran Theological Seminary in Shekow near Hankow in 1913 (transferred to Hong Kong in 1948 in face of the Communist take-over of China). A Chinese version of the *Confessio Augustana* was published for the first time in China in 1928 and in Hong Kong in the 1950s.

The four LWF member churches in Hong Kong include the Augsburg Confession and Luther's *Small Catechism* in their confessional statements. It should be noted that one of these, the Tsung Tsin Mission (membership c. 8,000), which grew out of the work of the Basel Missionary Society, holds to the *Variata*¹².

The Taiwan Lutheran Church is related to the missionary work of Norwegians, Danes, Finns, and Americans in the 1950s. The synod holds that the three Ecumenical Creeds, Luther's *Small Catechism*, and the Augsburg Confession "truly and clearly set forth the teachings of the Holy Scriptures"¹³. Another church in Taiwan, the China Evangelical Lutheran Church, which grew out of missionary work begun by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, is not yet a member of the LWF.

Other Asian Lutheran churches which accept the Confessio Augustana in their confessional statements are the churches in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea and the two small churches in Korea and the Philippines. The 1972 statement of faith of the Lutheran churches in Papua New Guinea (begun in 1963) attempts to take into account the worldwide and local theological issues that are relevant to Lutheran churches in that country (see also pp. 49-50 in this article).

With regard to Indonesia, some specific features must be mentioned:

1. While almost all the Lutheran churches throughout the world include "Lutheran" in their names (and sometimes also the word "Evangelical"), this applies to none of the Lutheran churches in Indonesia (with the exception of one very small church which was founded in 1964 and is not yet a member of the LWF). They prefer to call themselves Protestant churches - though both terms, Lutheran and Protestant, were foreign to the Confessio Augustana.
2. Of the six Indonesian LWF member churches, only two (the Indonesian Christian Church and the Simalungun Protestant Christian Church) mention the Augsburg Confession in their constitutional doctrinal statements.
3. Luther's Small Catechism has been widely used by all these churches from the outset, and the name and picture of Martin Luther is widely known even among Christians in the villages.
4. The Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP - the largest Lutheran church in Asia with more than one million members) has had its own confession of faith since 1951 (see also pp. 46-49 in this article). This church came into being in 1861 through the work of the Rhenish Missionary Society (and was led by that mission until 1940), but the 1930 constitution drafted by John Warneck was the first to mention a specific confessional basis. According to this constitution, "the HKBP embraces all the Protestant Batak Christians who ... confess that the Bible alone (the Old and New Testaments) is the only source of truth, light, and life, and who stand in the faith confessed by the Apostles, the disciples of Jesus Christ"¹⁴. The introduction to the 1951 confession reads: "The Confession of Faith of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant stands in continuity with the three

creeds which were confessed by the Church Fathers in the past, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed. It is the basis for what the HKBP is to preach, teach and live (Matt. 16:16), and is the summary of what we believe and hope for in this life and in the life to come. It is the authority in the HKBP for rejecting and opposing all false doctrine and heresy which is not in accordance with the Word of God."¹⁵

5. In Article II of its constitution, the Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia (GKPI) says that "the church is founded in Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, Lord and Savior, as witnessed by the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments)". Article IV states that "all the functions of the church are to be guided by the Apostles' Creed and the Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther"¹⁶.

LATIN AMERICA

Lutheranism in Latin America can be said to have started in the third decade of the 19th century with the arrival of immigrants from Germany, who were closely followed by immigrants from Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Before and after the Second World War a further wave of immigrants of Lutheran background came from a number of countries, including the Baltic states.

There is one LWF member church in each of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guyana, Mexico, and Surinam, while several churches are associated with the LWF and others are so-called independent congregations. Latin American churches are comparatively strong in theological education, publications, and the training of lay people for leadership positions in the congregations. As is to be expected in the case of immigrant churches faced with a large Roman Catholic majority, the Lutheran confessions serve to unite the Lutheran churches in Latin America, and extensive use is made of translations of these confessions - the Augsburg Confession in particular.

The largest number of Lutherans are to be found in the Portuguese-speaking country of Brazil (915,500). In 1950 the German-speaking Lutheran churches organized a federation of synods, the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil, whose confessional position is as follows: "The basis of the association

is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.... The association confesses its faith through the creeds of the ancient church and the Confessio Augustana as a confession of the Reformation."¹⁷

Among the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, Argentina claims the largest number of Lutherans (104,507). The situation there is similar to that in Brazil, with larger immigrant churches working alongside native Spanish-speaking churches.

In summary, one can say that the Confessio Augustana has been translated into the vernacular or national language in many Asian and African Lutheran churches, but that almost no books on the interpretation and meaning of the Augsburg Confession are as yet available in the indigenous languages - though it is mentioned, or parts of some of its articles quoted, in the new confessional statements. With the exception of Japan, and to a certain degree also Hong Kong, Luther's works, apart from his catechisms, are very rarely found in the vernacular languages. For this reason, the solemn pledge to uphold the Confessio Augustana as "a faithful and pure exposition of the word of God" or "important testimonies" to the Scriptures becomes a meaningless exercise. This limitation does not lie so much in the Augsburg Confession itself as in the circumstances in the younger churches¹⁸.

The above shows how the Lutheran confessional writings, and especially the Confessio Augustana and Luther's Small Catechism, were introduced to the younger churches. They were transmitted in the form in which they appeared in the mother churches and mission societies. Thus the problem raised by Bishop Heinrich Meyer at the 1955 Marangu Conference is still valid and requires an answer from the Lutheran churches in Africa and Asia: "The confessional statements of the Lutheran church are a dead possession and merely of historical value if they are not realized, actualized in our preaching now and here. We are neither a confessing church nor a Lutheran church by just having the Book of Concord on our bookshelves or by having a declaration incorporated in our church constitutions that we stand on the basis of the Lutheran confessions. If we are unable to let the confessional books become alive, not in the classroom of a European professor of dogmatics, but in the sermons and the teaching of e.g. an African evangelist, we are justly accused of confessionalism in the bad sense of that term."¹⁹

II. THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA AND THE LIFE OF THE YOUNGER CHURCHES

As has already been said, Lutheran Christians, even theologians, in the Third World have great difficulty digesting the content and meaning of the Augsburg Confession - not only because of time or cultural gaps, but also due to the fact that in order to gain a rich and deep understanding of the Confession one has to dig into the other confessional writings and/or theology of Luther and Melancthon²⁰.

Third World churches should, however, never forget that the Augsburg Confession was not merely a doctrinal statement of faith, but an act of confessing. The electors and princes risked their positions - and perhaps their lives - by signing it in the presence of an Emperor belonging to the powerful Roman Catholic Church. In the ancient church, *confessio* also meant the profession of faith by a martyr who had withstood persecution for his faith. Thus the word came to mean "a firm declaration of religious conviction" with or without persecution, but always in response to a basic situation or problem faced by the church - a *status confessionis*.

The call of the Confessio Augustana to the churches of today is for a clear and straightforward confession and confessing based on the Holy Scriptures and the witness of the early church, with the central purpose of confronting men and women with Christ, Lord and Savior. For all its importance, the Augsburg Confession was not intended to be a static set of rules and regulations. It is a statement of faith, a definition of belief, based on the Holy Scriptures and the early ecumenical creeds. As such, it has a meaning for us today, not only as a historical document, but also as a spiritual guide which can be applied to current problems in the Third World. The incorporation of the Augsburg Confession into the constitutional and doctrinal bases of the younger churches is of course important; but even more important are the churches' acts of confessing as they face the situations confronting the Third World: polytheism, synergism, legalism, traditional religions, ancestor worship, state and secular philosophies, the rise of pagan religions, race problems, secularism, poverty, etc. There is a danger of jumping from scriptural texts to contemporary application without deeper theological reflection; here, a doctrinal formulation like the Confessio Augustana can be of great assistance.

More specifically, theological reflection by the younger churches would be required with reference to:

a) God and the Trinity (CA I) over against Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, syncretism; b) original sin (CA II, XIX, and XX) over against shame cultures and the problems of guilt; c) an understanding of salvation in terms of justification of the sinner by faith through the grace of God in Jesus Christ (CA III and IV) over against mysticism and other forms of good deeds; d) the distinction between law and gospel, between the written word and the living gospel in Jesus Christ (over against fundamentalism and legalism); e) the emphasis on proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments as constitutive elements of the nature and function of the church, and consequently insistence upon freedom with regard to forms and manifestations of church order, structure, and life (CA VII and VIII) with a view to mission and unity; f) the persistent theological and critical quest for the truth of the gospel to be proclaimed and confessed in the contextual situation (in view of rapid developments in the Third World); g) the formulation of statements of faith and confession; h) the problem of unity within the Lutheran churches themselves and in the wider ecumenical area (over against the lack of inter-pulpit fellowship and intercommunion among some Lutheran churches).²¹

But rather than searching for or pointing to specific articles in the Confessio Augustana, one should understand it as a whole: one should see *justification by grace through faith* (CA IV) standing in the center of *the source of justification* (CA I, God; CA III, the Son of God; and CA XVII, the return of Christ to judgment); *the need for justification* (CA II, original sin; CA XVIII, free will; and CA XIX, the cause of sin); *the means of justification* (CA V, the office of the ministry; CA VII-XV, on the church, what the church is, the sacraments, order in the church, and church usages); and *the results of justification* (CA VI, the new obedience; CA XVI, civil government; and CA XX, faith and good works)²². Moreover, for a proper understanding of the Confessio Augustana, especially for the Third World churches, the Apology - with its comprehensive annotation of the articles with biblical texts - is a much needed exposition.

Several churches have written their own statements of faith while continuing to hold firmly to the Confessio Augustana and the other confessional writings:

The Doctrinal Statement of the Lutheran Church in India (1950)²³ is important because it "endeavored to avoid antiquated theological formulations and slogans"²⁴, and in this I think it achieved its goal. In 13 articles, including one on the word of God (on which, it is interesting to note, there is no article in the Augsburg Confession), it sets forth in clear, understandable language fundamental doctrines based on the Holy Scripture. It follows the content of the Confessio Augustana and refers to the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, but omits all references to the heresies and errors of the Roman Catholic Church. It is to be regretted that there are no references to specific Indian encounters and no rejections of heresies and threats in the Indian socio-political-religious situation. The Confessio Augustana coupled the teaching of truth with defence against error (*Lehre und Wehre*), introducing articles with a ritualistic "our churches teach" or "it is taught among us" and closing them with "we reject", "we condemn"; and any confession should not only declare what is taught, but also what is rejected. On the other hand, as a uniting document of the Lutheran churches within the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (which was founded in 1926 and became the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India in 1975), it must be given some credit. Confrontation with the problems of a merger (with the Church of South India) has challenged the Lutheran churches to establish their identity and study the Confessio Augustana along with the other Lutheran confessions.

*The Confession of Faith of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant*²⁵ (HKBP - Protestant Christian Batak Church), although it does not mention the Confessio Augustana or any of the other Lutheran confessional writings, is basically in harmony with the CA. The first confession of faith to be drawn up in the so-called younger churches, it was drafted and formulated by a commission of theologians and approved by the Great Synod of the Batak church in 1951. Historically, it was motivated by the intention of this church to join the family of Lutheran churches in the Lutheran World Federation, closely related to the desire to bear witness to problems faced by the church in its own religious, cultural, and political situation.

The preface to the confession points out: a) that "a confession of faith is necessary to establish our faith and to oppose heresy"; b) "that the church in every

age must renew and reform the confessions rather than close its eyes and simply rely on earlier confessions"; and c) that "in opposing new heresies with new confessions, the church has not forgotten earlier confessions", i.e., the three ecumenical creeds (reference is also made to the Reformation and the Barmen Declaration of 1934)²⁶. Conscious of the fact that traditional customs have infringed upon the church, it is further stated: "Our confession must deliberately face the customs and culture of our people. We must direct more attention toward this matter so that these customs and this culture do not destroy our faith."²⁷

In the Batak confession we can see both unity and development in relation to the three ecumenical creeds and the *Confessio Augustana*, and the wording of the Batak confession closely resembles that of the CA: It is seen to "contain pure doctrine"²⁸, to be the basis for what the HKBP is "to preach, teach and live", and to be a "summary of what we believe"²⁹. The necessity for the Batak confession is summarized as follows: because "faith always results in confession" (cf. 2Cor. 4:13); because the church must "be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls [it] to account for the hope that is in [it]" (1Pet. 3:15); and because "it makes known what is true and what is false doctrine" (cf. 1Jn. 4:2-4)³⁰. It is the "authority for rejecting and opposing all false doctrine and heresy which is not in accordance with the Word of God"³¹. In the *Confessio Augustana*, the conclusion to Articles I-XXI states: "This is just about a summary of the doctrines that are preached and taught in our churches for proper Christian instruction, the consolation of consciences, and the amendment of believers". The *Confessio Augustana* uses the words "rejected" and "condemned" (e.g., Articles V, XII, and XVI); the Batak confession "rejected" and "opposed".

The similarity of the content of many of the articles shows that the *Confessio Augustana* had a marked influence on the Batak confession. This can be seen from the following table:

*Batak Confession**Confessio Augustana*

Concerning God (I)

God (I)

The Trinity (II)

God (I)

The Special Acts of the Triune God
(III)

The Son of God (III)

Batak Confession

The Word of God (IV)
 Origin of Sin (V)
 Inherited Sin (VI)
 Salvation from Sin (VII)
 The Church (VIII - in part)
 Those Who Minister in the Church (IX)

 The Holy Sacraments (X)

 Church Order (XI)
 Concerning Government of the State (XII)
 Sunday (XIII - stressing that Sunday, "the Lord's Day", "the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" is to be kept holy, not the Jewish Sabbath)
 Food (XIV)
 Faith and Good Works (XV)
 Remembrance of the Dead (XVI)
 Concerning the Angels (XVII)
 The Last Judgment (XVIII)

Confessio Augustana

No corresponding article
 The Cause of Sin (XIX)
 Original Sin (II)
 Justification (IV)
 Order in the Church (XIV)
 The Office of the Ministry (V - with the exception that the Batak article also deals with pastoral care, the exercise of spiritual discipline, and diakonia)
 Baptism (IX) and The Holy Supper of Our Lord (X)
 Church Usages (XV)
 Civil Government (XVI)

 No corresponding article

 The Distinction of Foods (XXVI)
 Faith and Good Works (XX)
 No corresponding article
 No corresponding article
 The Return of Christ to Judgment (XVII)

The Batak confession opposes some Roman Catholic teachings, e.g.: "that Mary ... can pray for us to God", "that the Pope in Rome is the Vicar of Christ on earth" (Article III), "that there is purgatory", "that a mass for the dead may be said", and "the practice of praying to the ... saints" (Article XVI). Similar to CA VII, the Batak confession says "that the true church is present when the gospel is purely preached [and] the two sacraments are truly administered", but it also includes a third element: "and when church discipline is exercised in order to prevent sin" (Article VIII). This can be seen as an example of the Batak church's legalistic character and/or the influence of a strong Dutch reformed tradition. CA XIV and the closing sentence of the Batak Article IX both refer to the fact that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call. Concerning the Trinity, the Batak

confession rejects the Islamic interpretation that Jesus was only a prophet (Article III).

The ordering of the articles is clear and well organized. The first four take up *theology*, the second group *hamartiology* (Articles V-VII), and the third group *ecclesiology* (Articles VIII-XI). Next comes *ethics*, or the norms for Christians (Articles XII-XV) and finally *eschatology*.

The uniqueness of the Batak confession, however, was due not only to the ordering of its articles, but also to its position vis-à-vis actual and concrete problems. It took a position on four fronts: against non-Christian religions: Siradjabatak, traditional religions, Islam, and syncretism; 2. against the doctrines of other churches, splinter groups, and sects: the Roman Catholic Church, splinter groups in the Batak church, enthusiasts or spiritualists, and sectarians (Adventists and Theosophists); 3. against political and religious ideologies: excessive nationalism, communism, and capitalism; and 4. against un-Christian adat customs related to ancestor worship: the calling of God "Grandfather", fatalism, and the belief in the souls (ghosts) of the dead.

A Statement of Faith was prepared by the three Lutheran churches and three Lutheran missions (including the New Guinea Lutheran Mission - Missouri Synod) in Papua New Guinea in 1972³². In the preface to this 325-page book, which gives both the Pidgin and English versions, the Committee preparing the statement (New Guineans and white missionaries) say that they tried to communicate faithfully the teaching of the Lutheran confessions. It is beautifully done and easy to read, in part like a catechism, in part like a sermon. Some chapters open with "we confess ..." and close with "we reject ..."; others summarize this in a concluding statement.

Of special interest are those articles which have no counterpart in the Confessio Augustana, for example, Article 13 (The Christian and Society), where it is said that "races and tribes are part of God's order", as also are customs and languages. In Article 14 (Christian Marriage and the Christian Family), Christian family life is explained in a very patriarchal way: the work of a woman is to be a helper to her husband, to love him, bear children, and care for them; the man's work is to be head of the family, to protect, defend, and love it. Sin causes polygamy, it says, and is contrary to God's will. It is interesting to note that this article

quotes 1 Peter 2:9-10 to describe the fellowship of all believers - perhaps because it is not to be found in the *Confessio Augustana*? In the last article (*Responsible Use of all Blessings from the Father*) the parts of the Apostles' Creed regarding the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are explained. Here again, doctrinal and ethical teaching is based on the word of God, guided by the Lutheran confessions and taking into account the geographical setting. When it talks about the unity of the church, it is both ecumenical and doctrinal: It recognizes all Christians spread over the world, but states that what creates unity is "that we agree concerning the Gospel of Christ, that we preach the Gospel purely, as Christ gave it ... and administer and receive the Holy Sacraments according to God's Word" (p. 197). With regard to the need for confessional statements, it says that "the church has a duty to confess the Gospel of Christ before man", the purpose being to "strengthen ... unity", to be a guide and norm, and to defend the church against errors and false teachings. Article 10 (*The Church and Civil Government*) follows Romans 13 and CA XVI and also makes use of the explanation in the Apology.

On the whole, this statement of faith makes excellent reading, and it would be ideal as a teaching guide for lay-training programs in the churches. Since many Christians are in civil or military service, there is a real need for an adult catechism dealing with Christian social teaching, and this becomes of prime importance where the churches - above all in Africa and Asia - are religious minorities facing major established religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

In discussions concerning the statements of faith of the Lutheran churches in India and Papua New Guinea, and the confession of faith of the Batak church, the question of the need for formulating a new confession of faith in Lutheran churches of the AALA countries has also been raised. The HKBP confession is basically a new confession of faith; it makes no reference to the *Confessio Augustana* or the other Lutheran confessions. To me, the statement of faith produced by the Indian Lutheran churches looks like a rewriting of the basic elements of the Lutheran Confession, while the one from Papua New Guinea begins to reinterpret the Lutheran Confession into a given cultural context. Perhaps this Consultation will provide a direction for facing these problems.

Is the Confessio Augustana of much help to the churches of Africa and Latin America as regards their socio-political concerns and involvement? For example, if a great institution like the LWF could support the nomination of Dom Helder Camara for the Nobel Peace Prize (seeing him "as a symbol for those who have devoted their lives to the struggle against oppression and inhuman conditions of life"³³), there must be much in the Latin American way of life which compels the churches to reinterpret the Augsburg Confession. An interpretation of justice and liberation in light of CA III and IV would be important.

The churches in Africa would render a great service by helping us to understand black theology, with its roots in the African religious experience, its anti-racist struggle for freedom and justice, and its efforts to draw answers from the Holy Scriptures. John Mbiti has listed some 600 different concepts of God in traditional African religions³⁴. In what way can the Confessio Augustana and Luther's catechism be helpful? How can the strong African concern for tribal community be brought into the confessions? Confessional statements should not simply reflect environmental conditions, such as contemporary national and socio-religious cultures, but also be a consequence of the church's serious wrestling with the commitment of its faith in Jesus Christ. To what extent does the Confessio Augustana deal with Christian social commitment? Although it does give points of departure³⁵, a basic social ethic seems to be missing. As William Lazareth put it at the LWF Sixth Assembly: "Lutherans confess in faith the twofold rule of God as our saving Redeemer and preserving Creator. Yet in daily life we have too often over-emphasized our Christian freedom from 'sin, death and the devil' at the expense of our social and political liberation from injustice, oppression and the violation of human rights and dignity."³⁶

The statement of this Assembly on "Socio-Political Functions and Responsibilities in the Lutheran Churches" pointed to a more conscious development. It "welcomes the fact that the Lutheran World Federation is engaged in studies of the root causes of social and economic injustice in all their dimensions, affirms the need for radical changes in the world's economic systems as one essential step toward attaining peace, [and] recommends that studies of root causes be carried out in consultation with the member churches"³⁷.

In its statement on "Southern Africa: Confessional Integrity", the Sixth Assembly said: "Confessional subscription is more than a formal acknowledgment of doctrine. Churches ... thereby commit themselves to show through their daily witness and service that the gospel has empowered them to live as the people of God.... Political and social systems may become so perverted and oppressive that it is consistent with the confession to reject them and to work for changes. We especially appeal to our white member churches in southern Africa to recognize that the situation in southern Africa constitutes a *status confessionis*. This means that, on the basis of faith and in order to manifest the unity of the church, churches would publicly and unequivocally reject the existing apartheid system."³⁸

As far as the AALA churches are concerned, I believe that Article XVI of the Confessio Augustana (Civil Government) is insufficient. How should a Christian relate to his/her government, especially when it is anti-Christian and/or totalitarian? What is meant by a "just war"? In the Large Catechism (on the fourth petition in the Lord's Prayer) Luther himself says that war is caused by the devil. Emanating as it did from a limited historical setting and a "Christian society", Article XVI did not speak to a world in which Christians and non-Christians live side by side and it can be part of a Christian's task to actively criticize a government. How should the churches react when a government tries to enforce an ideology and demands that they recognize it in a written statement?

Before closing this section, I want to mention the implications of the Confessio Augustana for unity and ecumenical endeavors. Even though they belong to the same confessional family, it is mainly through conferences - on the local, national, regional, or world level - that Lutheran churches, especially in the AALA countries, have come to know one another better and gained a better understanding and appreciation of the Augsburg Confession. One result of this is that Lutheran churches in the same continent or nation have begun to cooperate more closely in matters of proclamation, witness, and service. There are now Lutheran national committees in many countries; in others, Lutheran churches have organized Lutheran councils, federations, or united churches.

In general, the AALA churches are ecumenical in the sense that they have representatives in the National Christian Council of their own country or in regional ecumenical organizations (e.g., the Christian Conference of Asia and the All Africa Conference of Churches) as well as in the World Council of Churches. In Africa and Asia it is rare to find mergers of Lutheran churches (like the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church); on the contrary, a number of new churches which claim to be Lutheran have emerged from schisms of non-theological origin. Is this related to the Confessio Augustana having a kind of "spiritual unity concept" of the church? What has the Confession to say about the organic unity of churches? In general, it is the Lutheran churches in Asia and parts of Africa which - for pragmatic reasons - are more open to pulpit and altar fellowship and interdenominational worship services³⁹.

In Article VII of the Confessio Augustana we have the *satis est* statement, which stresses that for the true unity of the church "it is sufficient ... that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word". The church, the assembly of believers, is "made up of men scattered throughout the world who agree on the Gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether they have the same human traditions or not" (Apology VII and VIII, 10). The Confessio Augustana was meant to have a strong ecumenical orientation and to serve the unity of the "apostolic" and "catholic" church. But what kind of unity did it envisage?

In view of the present situation within the Third World Churches, the question could be raised whether the *satis est* statement really "is sufficient" for the unity of the churches. The social configuration of faith and the consequent involvement of the church in so-called non-dogmatic factors which intrinsically belong to its historical life are very important in the younger churches⁴⁰. There is also the question related to the office of the ministry, because, as stated in CA V, it was instituted by God. However, the LWF Fifth Assembly stressed that "the *satis est* ... is valid not only for the relationship of Lutheran churches among themselves, but also for fellowship with the other churches. To make additional demands as a prerequisite for church fellowship is to deny the ecumenical dimension of the Reformation confession."⁴¹ As has already been mentioned, the

Batak confession does include a third "sign of the church": the exercise of church discipline in order to prevent sin.

I feel that the younger churches have great difficulty in understanding what is meant by a "pure" understanding of the word of God. European theologians could write more openly on the historical limitations of the Lutheran confessional writings and explain what the *Confessio Augustana* means by "essential agreement"⁴². In this quest, a more open and honest exposition of the opinions of the younger churches would be of great service.

One should not speak about "identity" with the *Confessio Augustana* (and the other Lutheran confessional writings) in a static sense, but include the dimension of historical change and development inherent in the life of Lutheran churches throughout the world in relation to the given context and to commitment to the word of God.

III. CONCLUSION

Scattered information concerning the role of the *Confessio Augustana* in the life of the younger churches points to the following typical traits:

- a) With the planting of churches through missions, the Lutheran confessional writings - especially the *Confessio Augustana* and Luther's Small Catechism - entered into the constitutions of the younger churches, as often as not without the churches having wrestled with the question of the deeper meaning and relevance of the Confession to their own particular situation.
- b) In some churches the *Confessio Augustana* was simply accepted as a classical formulation of Lutheran doctrines of the past, as a symbol which identified them as Lutherans within the LWF family. They did not make much effort to use it as an active norm for teaching and the proclamation of the gospel.
- c) Some other churches, challenged by confrontation with immediate problems and the search for a Lutheran confessional identity, have found stimulation and guidance in the *Confessio Augustana*. Through LWF-related national, regional,

and world conferences, more and more theologians and church leaders from Lutheran churches in the AALA countries have acquired a knowledge of and interest in the Lutheran confessional writings. Several have made confessional statements, and in the case of the Batak church a new confession has been formulated.

We now have the beginnings of a significant new development: a transition is underway from constitutional subscription to translation and study of the *Confessio Augustana*. Instead of being silent, the younger churches are coming up with some theological and ecclesiastical responses; instead of simply receiving, they are contributing to an understanding of the word of God in proclamation, witness, and service.

It must be stated that there is a real need for a Lutheran catechism for adults in which the basic teachings of the *Confessio Augustana* (and the other Lutheran confessional writings) are taken up, rewritten, and reinterpreted in order to provide answers to burning issues faced by Lutheran churches in their various settings. We certainly do not want to see the Lutheran churches of the Third World grasping for a "cheap" identity, using the Lutheran confessions simply as a "name-tag", or mechanically repeating the traditional confessional statements. If they have a realistic and dynamic commitment to the Holy Scriptures' relevance to their situation and acknowledge the intention and hermeneutical principles of the Lutheran confessions - especially the centrality of God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ, *sola gratia* and *sole fide* (CA IV) - then the Lutheran churches of the AALA countries have their place, their contributions, and their special gifts in the task of confessing Christ as Lord and Savior of the world. Formulation and accent will vary according to the specific act of confessing and missionary perspective prevalent in the different Third World churches. There will also be weaknesses. But, at the same time, one result will be an enrichment of our understanding of confessing Christ within the Lutheran heritage, which is after all part of the one universal apostolic faith. The question of the Roman Catholic Church's "recognition" of the *Confessio Augustana* - on which reflections are still awaited from the churches in the Third World - can be of great interest⁴³.

Let me close this paper with the following comments: 1. Our basic concern in all doctrinal statements and confessions of faith is that the gospel saves us; we do

not save the gospel! 2. What does it profit a church to retain the purity of the gospel, but to lose the world?

NOTES

1. *The Church and the Confessions: The Role of the Confessions in the Life and Doctrine of the Lutheran Churches*, ed. Vilmos Vajta and Hans Weissgerber (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963).
2. Hans Weissgerber, "The Valid Confessional Symbols", *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
3. Gunnar Lislerud, "The Confessional Position of the Lutheran Churches of Southern Africa"; *ibid.*, p. 115 (my italics). Cf. Weissgerber, *ibid.*, p. 20.
4. *Lutheran World*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2/3, 1977, p. 139.
5. Lislerud (see n. 3), pp. 106-118.
6. *Marangu: A Record of the All-Africa Lutheran Conference, Marangu, Tanganyika, East Africa, November 12-22, 1955*, ed. LWF Department of World Mission (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1956), p. 44; and "The Marangu Documents", *Lutheran World*, Vol. II, No. 4, 1956, p. 386.
7. *ibid.*, pp. 45 and 386, resp.
8. *ibid.*, pp. 48 and 388, resp.
9. Arno Lehmann, "The Early Years of the Lutheran Church in India", *Lutheran World*, Vol. II, No. 1, 1955, p. 56.
10. Even as late as 1978, when I was lecturing in Nagercoil and Gurukul, Madras, out of more than 50 participating pastors only three had ever read parts of the *Confessio Augustana*. Professor George Forell, who was also lecturing in Nagercoil and Gurukul at that time, wrote in a report: "Some pastors admitted that before taking this course at Gurukul they had only known the word 'Augsburg Confession', but had never studied it or even read it". The same view was expressed by Dr. Jackayya of Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil, in his paper for the APATS (Asia Program for Advanced Training and Studies) Seminar (Hong Kong,

March 10-17, 1979): "But until recently the Augsburg Confession was a document known mostly by name as part of a constitutional article of our Lutheran churches."

11. *Lutheran World*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2/3, 1977, p. 203.
12. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 207, where it is merely stated that the Tsung Tsin Mission "accepts the Augsburg Confession and uses Luther's Small Catechism for confirmation instruction". A report by Dr. G. Lamm states that it is the Variata. Tsung Tsin Mission's history began in 1846 with the Basel Mission, which is supported by Lutheran and Reformed constituencies.
13. Weissgerber (see n. 2), p. 21.
14. Andar M. Lumbantobing, "The Confession of the Batak Church", *The Church and the Confessions* (see n. 1), p. 119.
15. *Confession of Faith of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant: Approved by the Great Synod at Sipoholon, November 28-30, 1951* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 6. (The text of this confession is also to be found in *The Church and the Confessions* [see n. 1], pp. 136-147, and *Asian Voices in Christian Theology*, ed. and with an introduction by Gerald H. Anderson [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976], pp. 214-226.)
16. From the 1979 Almanac of the GKPI (my translation). In Section VII, "The Ministry and the Church", it is stated: "All members are called to responsibility in spiritual and material matters, based on the 'priesthood of all believers'" - a terminology which is not to be found in the *Confessio Augustana*.
17. Weissgerber (see n. 2), p. 16.
18. Cf. James Scherer, "The Confessions in the Younger Churches with Particular Reference to the Problem of Christian Unity in Asia", *The Church and the Confessions* (see n. 1), p. 153.
19. Heinrich Meyer, "The Relevance of Our Confession Today", *Marangu* (see n.6), pp. 38-39. Cf. Lislserud (see n. 3), p. 109.
20. In Japan, where there is a profound admiration for great theologians, Barth, E. Brunner, Tillich, Niebuhr, etc., are studied. One can say that the theologies of Luther and Melancthon are studied more than the *Confessio Augustana* itself.
21. Cf. *Lutheran Identity: Final Report of the Study Project*, "The

Identity of the Lutheran Churches in the Context of the Challenges of our Time" (Strasbourg: Institute for Ecumenical Research, 1977). In an article entitled "The LWF and its Role in the Ecumenical Movement" (*Lutheran World*, Vol. XX, No. 1, 1973), Harding Meyer has also attempted to list seven specific elements of Lutheranism (p. 19). The group reports of the Gaborone Consultation mention several priorities based on regional situations in Africa: for the edited report, see *All Africa Lutheran Consultation, Gaborone, Botswana, 7-16 February, 1977* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation Department of Church Cooperation, n.d.), pp. 218-235.

22. Cf. Charles S. Anderson, *Faith and Freedom: The Christian Faith According to the Lutheran Confessions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977).
23. For the complete text, see *The Lutheran World Review*, Vol. II, No. 4, April 1950, pp. 222-238.
24. H. Meyer, "Christian Opportunity in a New India", *The Lutheran World Review*, Vol. II, No. 3, January 1950, p. 139.
25. On the rise and development of Christianity among the Bataks, see Paul B. Pedersen, *Batak Blood and Protestant Soul: The Development of National Batak Churches in North Sumatra* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970); and T. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1968). On the Batak Confession, see Andar M. Lumbantobing, "The Confession of the Batak Church", *The Church and the Confessions* (see n. 1), pp. 119-147.
26. *Confession of Faith of the HKBP* (see n. 15), p. 3.
27. *ibid.*, p. 4. Cf. also Sutan M. Hutagalung, "The Interface of Culture and Faith among the Batak Christians of Indonesia", *The Encounter of the Church with Movements of Social Change in Various Cultural Contexts: Part II, Papers from a Consultation in Glion, Switzerland, July 4-11, 1976* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation Department of Studies, 1977), pp. 61-81.
28. *Confession of Faith of the HKBP*, p. 4.
29. *ibid.*, p. 6.
30. *ibid.*, p. 5.
31. *ibid.*, p. 6.

32. *Tok Bilip Bilong Yumi: A (Lutheran) Statement of Faith* (Madang, Papua New Guinea: Kristen Press, 1972). It contains 15 articles: God; The Holy Scriptures; God Made Us and Every Creature; Sin; Help for Us Sinners; The Christian Life; Christian Prayer; Baptism and the Lord's Supper; The Communion of Saints; The Church and Civil Government; The Last Things; The Works of Satan; The Christian and Society; Christian Marriage and the Christian Family; Responsible Use of all Blessings from the Father. For a review, see *Lutheran World*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, 1974, pp. 218-219.
33. For the full text of the statement, see *Sent into the World: The Proceedings of the Fifth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, Evian, France, July 14-24, 1970*, ed. LaVern K. Grosc (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), p. 146.
34. John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1970).
35. For example, Article VI: "faith should produce good fruits"; and Article XVIII: "all men ... have a natural, innate understanding and reason".
36. *In Christ - A New Community: The Proceedings of the Sixth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, June 13-25, 1977*, ed. Arne Sovik (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1977), p. 123.
37. *ibid.*, pp. 176-177. See also Yoshiro Ishida, "Confessions and Confessionality of the Church", *LWF Report*, No. 5, August 1979, pp. 7-14.
38. *In Christ - A New Community*, pp. 179-180.
39. See *Church in Fellowship, Vol. II: Pulpit and Altar Fellowship Among Lutheran Minority and Younger Churches*, ed. Paul E. Hoffman and Harding Meyer (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969). One of the latest developments in Asia (1978) was the formation of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Malaysia and Singapore (comprising the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore, the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore, the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia, and the Protestant Church in Sabah). On the other hand, the six Lutheran churches in Indonesia (with a total membership of ca. 1,700,000) have not yet been able to form a Lutheran national committee or federation as an instrument for cooperation.
40. On the importance of "non-theological" matters, see *Ecumenical Methodology: Documentation and Report*, ed. Peder Højen (Geneva:

The Lutheran World Federation, 1978), esp. pp. 23-32 and the following two articles: Helmut Zeddies, "The Role of Non-Dogmatic Factors in the Ecumenical Encounter" (pp. 86-100) and Gilberto Giménez, "The Role of Non-Theological Factors in the Ecumenical Encounter" (pp. 101-106).

41. *Sent into the World* (see n. 33), p. 75.
42. This question was stressed by Harding Meyer in his article, "The LWF and its Role in the Ecumenical Movement" (see n. 21), p. 27.
43. See, for example, *Katholische Anerkennung des Augsburgischen Bekenntnisses?*, ed. Harding Meyer et al., *Oekumenische Perspektiven*, Vol. 9 (Frankfurt: Otto Lembeck, 1977).

ULRICH KÜHN

THE FUTURE OF A TRADITION

Rereading the Confessio Augustana as an Authoritative Form of the Christian Tradition

As Karl Jaspers once said: "Even if all the documents remain, the tradition disappears."¹ This indicates a problem which inevitably arises when the celebration of a jubilee leads us to make a 16th century document our own and to study it scientifically from various angles. "Even if all the documents remain, the tradition disappears." Yes indeed; there stands the document before our eyes with its original meaning, purpose, and affirmation, in amazingly sharp detail. But does that really make it our own document? Could it not be, on the contrary, that meticulous historical research and sensitivity actually prevent us from making history our own in a living way? The thesis of another 20th century thinker, the philosopher Gerhard Krüger, certainly reminds us that the blame for modern loss of tradition must be laid at the door of the historical sense².

The task assigned to me here is to reflect on "the future of a tradition", of one particular tradition, that of the *Confessio Augustana* of 1530. Does *this* tradition really have any future at all? This is surely the first question to be raised in connection with the main thesis of our theme. Not that this is a new question. On the contrary, it is one which is asked by many. Some raise it *anxiously*: the critics of the proposed Catholic recognition of the *Confessio Augustana* wonder whether we are not here choosing a retrograde form of ecumenical effort, when it is really the future which is beckoning us forward³. While many may be seriously considering the idea of a Catholic recognition of this document, the real question surely is whether the *Confessio Augustana* is still a living reality in Lutheran churches and congregations today, or not rather something confined to formal constitutions and in which only official church courts are interested. Others, completely sceptical of any binding statement of the content of the doctrine

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of the church, radically challenge the idea that the Confessio Augustana has any future at all. Should Christendom really be taking its bearings from dogmatic formulations of doctrine and not rather from life in the spirit of Jesus, which alone can open the way to the future? But others again question the thesis that the Confessio Augustana has any future in a mood of frustration. They - and they are growing in number today - call for a binding doctrine of the church, but are not satisfied when they are offered 16th century documents in response. Can such documents really do justice to the burning questions of today? Are not those who cling almost pedantically to the 16th century confessions of faith hopelessly ignoring the church's contemporary problems?

Faced with these critical standpoints, the warning voiced by Karl Jaspers and Gerhard Krüger suggests a more qualified approach to the tradition. "Even if all the documents remain, the tradition disappears." The concern of these contemporary philosophers reveals a deep sense of the dependence of human life on tradition. Clearly, however, this essential tradition is not directly identical with certain texts and documents, but can indeed be distorted by texts, or rather by a certain way of handling them.

If we too have to listen to these voices from the realm of philosophy, this means that in certain circumstances we must distinguish hermeneutically between text and tradition, letter and spirit, if a tradition is to have any future. In fact, we seem to touch here the very nerve of the problem which confronts us when we talk of "the future of a tradition" in respect of the Confessio Augustana. In what follows I shall first of all consider the problem from the fundamental standpoint of the self-understanding of the Christian faith (I and II) and then, in two further stages of the argument, deal directly with the Confessio Augustana (III and IV).

I. BIBLICAL ASPECTS OF THE THEME: TRADITION AS CONDITION FOR THE FUTURE OF FAITH

If we are to survey adequately the dimensions within which the question of the future of the tradition presented to us in the Confessio Augustana needs to be considered, we must step back a little and be clear as to the sense in which,

according to the biblical witness, the event of tradition is fundamental for and characteristic of the Christian faith as a whole.

1. To start with, dependence on tradition is part of the basic structure of the Christian faith. Authentic Christian proclamation is always a process in which what has been received is handed on. At two central places in 1 Corinthians, Paul says that he received what he delivered: first, in reference to the tradition of the Lord's Supper (1Cor. 11:23); and second, in quoting the primitive Christian confession of faith in the death and resurrection (1Cor 15:3). By using rabbinical technical terms here⁴, Paul reminds us of the vital dependence of the Old Testament faith, too, on the tradition, the transmission, of God's acts. This fundamental dependence of faith on tradition is connected with God's engagement in historical action in the world. Finally, God sent his Son, gave him up for us all (*Christus traditus!*)⁵; in other words, acted once and for all in this human being Jesus at a definite moment of world history. For our salvation, therefore, we depend on the Good News of this Jesus, on the tradition of his incarnation, ministry, suffering; on the tradition of the gospel which came to the world in this man; on the tradition, the handing on, of the content of *this* tradition. So it also comes about that the witness of the first witnesses of this event, the apostles, acquires fundamental, normative significance for the church of all ages.

2. In the New Testament, the concept of tradition is inseparable from the concept of "remembrance" (*anamnesis*). The two terms come together in the setting of the tradition of the Lord's Supper. The tradition to which Paul refers back is a challenge, a summons, to *anamnesis*: The meal which Jesus took with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion is to be continued by his disciples "in remembrance" of him. The reference here is not simply to a mental recollection of the past, but to an action whereby the one whose memorial it is himself continues his own presence. This "memorial action" also has its Old Testament prefiguration, namely, the Passover as memorial of the Exodus from Egypt. Here, too, a past event became present, or, more precisely, each co-celebrant became "a contemporary of the past event"⁶.

This *anamnesis* action, as continued in the Christian eucharist, can be considered a central mode of tradition in action. Tradition, tradition in the sense of

contemporization, occurs not simply in a verbal transmission of what has been heard, but in the community's continuing *to do* what has happened to it. And we may also add that even where the tradition of Christ takes the form of words, here again it is one form of the contemporization of the contents of the tradition. Here again, this is the case at the very center of the eucharistic tradition where the Lord's death is proclaimed (1Cor. 11:26). It also happens whenever his name is named (Mt. 18:20) and wherever his gospel is passed on, and here there is an indissoluble connection between proclamation and the conduct of Christians (cf. Paul's idea of the "letter from Christ" [2Cor. 3:3]). The handing on of Christ and of the gospel is thus a complex occurrence of contemporization.

3. Since Christ, as the central content of the Christian tradition, becomes present in the handing-on process, he steps forth from the past, directly lays claim to us and comforts us, but also at the same time radically calls us in question. This latter notion is what J.B. Metz is referring to when he speaks of "perilous remembrance" to describe the basic event of Christian faith⁷. For example, the contemporizing memorial of Christ is dangerous because this Christ (and therefore the Christian message in its entirety) also includes an essential dimension which is critical of tradition⁸. Christ opposes the new to the old. Tradition can in fact mean its use to evade God's calling (cf. Mt. 8:21f.). But Christ's coming is also critical of the tradition in the sense that what has already been ordained by God is cancelled or tracked back to its true and absolutely original meaning (cf. the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount: "but I say to you"). We already find this supersession of the past in the Old Testament; for example, in the Old Testament expectation of the "new covenant" (Jer. 31). Here lies the tremendous theological significance of the "history of tradition" disclosed by critical biblical research, which shows that the decisive element in the process of tradition is "the way in which the saving data are constantly applied to, and made relevant for, contemporary situations"⁹. According to von Rad, the whole of the Old Testament "can only be read as a book in which expectation keeps mounting up to vast proportions"¹⁰. But not even the coming of the new in Jesus is itself already the goal. This coming also points beyond itself to its fulfilment, its completion. We find this once again attested in particular by the tradition of the Lord's Supper, in the so-called

"eschatological prospect (Mk. 14:25). It is also illustrated by the distinctively eschatological nature of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God which oscillates between present and future, as well as by the horizon of hope in Paul (Rom. 5:8) and in the revelation of John - "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

In the biblical view, the distinctive and even paradoxical aspect of the tradition is that it is not focussed one-dimensionally on the past, but contemporizes the past and has a significance and influence which advances beyond the past and constantly opens up new ways into the future. It is here that we must find the significance of the tradition for the future of faith.

II. CONFESSION AND DOGMA AS FORMS OF TRADITION

1. As we have seen, tradition from Christ occurs in a variety of ways right from the beginning, including tradition in the form of confession. Already in the New Testament, research has uncovered the role of such confessions where "doxology and didache, prayer and witness are uniquely combined"¹¹. Confessions articulate central affirmations of faith. In a more developed form, they very soon become the expression of consensus in the church, as for example in the old baptismal creeds¹². At the same time, they also acquired the function of authentic church doctrine, a *regula fidei* by which heresy was excluded and positive signposts erected for faith and proclamation. The essential purpose of this kind of ecclesiastically authoritative doctrine was to defend the integrity of the church and the gospel, giving support here to the canon of "apostolic" writings and to the church's ministry. We have room here only to note that the precise definition of the relationship between these three elements conceals serious problems which are a matter of controversy among the different churches.

In its way, confession in the sense of church doctrine shares in the task of memorializing Christ in a way which keeps open its significance for the future. But its main specific significance for the church only comes adequately into view if we do not ignore its structural limits and historical character. What does this mean in concrete terms?

One structural limit of this form of the tradition of the gospel as confession

and church doctrine lies in the definite degree of objectivity and abstractness which characterizes such doctrinal definitions. In a confession, the direct address and claim of the gospel is less articulated than in other forms of the tradition. Furthermore, being a church consensus, a confession of faith cannot reproduce the diversity of legitimate attestations of faith in the church. On the contrary, it formulates certain essential points of convergence, but often does so in such a way that we are left with compromise formulas (as in the trinitarian and christological dogma), with a "communal linguistic ruling on terminology"¹³ which is necessary for the sake of fellowship. Moreover, only what is absolutely necessary for church fellowship is formulated; as a rule, only boundary marks are established (again, for example, in the christological formulations of Chalcedon). The full content of the gospel never comes to expression¹⁴. At the same time, such limits offer a surprising advantage for the process of tradition. By its very structure, the church confession is dependent on new and diverse interpretation, in the light of the richness of Holy Scripture and in relation to the new context of confession and proclamation.

There are also other aspects which make clear in various ways the historical nature of every dogma. Which part of the church's confession is formulated depends also to a large extent on contemporary questions to which a specific answer has to be given and attempts made at clarification - and these are in addition often extremely one-sided. Every church confession, moreover, is couched in the language and terminology of a particular period and a particular cultural area. The major dogmatic decisions of the church are, once again, a typical example. But this historicity of the confession or dogma also likewise brings with it a special opportunity for the whole tradition-event: It reflects the need for the gospel to "find new verbal expression and to be historically translated again and again in keeping with changing historical situations"¹⁵.

Is it altogether beside the mark to suppose that the openness to the future of the Christian tradition of salvation, mentioned earlier, is expressed in the doctrinal structure and historicity of the church confession? The only possible theme of the church's dogma is the one Christ as attested basically and authoritatively in the apostolic writings. But this one Christ is constantly moving into new areas; he has not yet reached the goal. The doctrinal form of tradition

- while retaining its peculiar function - reflects this inasmuch as it constantly points beyond itself in that double sense, and to this extent is inseparable from an element of hope. To quote Walter Kasper again: "Both finality and provisionality are part of dogma. Dogma is the form in which the gospel of the eschatological coming of Christ is attested in the church. A dogma is the final eschatological truth of Christ in the form of a provisional event of becoming."¹⁶

2. Of course, the set of problems with which we find ourselves confronted here is one where central issues of the Catholic-Lutheran dialog arise: questions of Scripture and tradition which ultimately concern the role of the church in the historical process of the development of church doctrine. Let us at least look at one of these problems which is also particularly acute today in the ecumenical discussion of the Lutheran tradition.

With respect to the relationship between Scripture and the doctrinal tradition of the church, Catholic and Lutheran theologians are largely agreed today that the Holy Scriptures constitute the really authoritative document for faith and church proclamation, that the doctrinal tradition of the church is related to these Scriptures as an interpretation of them (not a complement to them), and that the Scriptures in turn set the doctrinal tradition of the church within the light of their broad declarations. However, the question is whether and in what sense, in view of what was said about the limits of every dogma, we can speak about the irrevocability of doctrinal decisions and therefore of their inerrancy - as the Catholic view considers it legitimate to do - and, specifically, even when *at the same time* we stress the historical and, to that extent, provisional character of this irrevocability. (There is no necessary contradiction between the two.) But does this not bring church doctrine closer to Scripture than is permissible? Does dogma (and then, above all, its development in the living magisterium or teaching office of the church) not acquire here an autonomy which exempts it from criticism by the Scriptures? But reference has constantly been made in evangelical theology to Luther's view that even councils could err. And indeed, there can be no guarantee in advance that a solemn church assembly or any other doctrinal court of appeal will produce correct dogmatic statements. That is perhaps only one aspect of the matter, however. What we must ask, in other words, is whether it can be taken as a serious possibility that the Lutheran churches could one day revoke

their own doctrinal tradition? In the Lutheran church too, is there not irrevocability where its exegesis of Scripture has been officially linked to "other symbols and other writings" as "witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood in the church of God by contemporaries with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned"¹⁷. This irrevocability of the provisional perhaps came into existence only when the church accepted and preserved in itself such a view in the process of reception. Such irrevocability would not have been planned in advance, but have only subsequently come into existence.

One other question must at least be mentioned. Catholic theologians have a problem with the Lutheran view of the confession of faith: Does it permit a sufficiently close connection between the confession of faith and church communion? Can the confession fulfil its role in establishing unity not only within the unity of *communio*, *traditio*, and *successio*, in such a way that structural reincorporation into church *communio* would also be a condition of real unity as well as and together with the confession of faith?¹⁸ What is in debate here is not just the content of the confession of faith and its open-endedness in the process of tradition, but also its role in the church as a whole.

Both these problems from the Catholic-Lutheran dialog are also reflected in the ecumenical discussion of the *Confessio Augustana*. At this point, therefore, we must leave these general reflections on tradition and confession and turn to the *Confessio Augustana* itself.

III. THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA - SUBJECT AND OBJECT IN THE CHURCH'S PROCESS OF TRADITION

What I have been trying to do in these reflections on the significance of tradition for faith and its future, as well as on confession and dogma as forms of tradition, is to identify aspects which should help us now to achieve a clear picture of the role of one *specific* tradition for the future of faith and the church. The term "tradition" has now a more restricted sense than in our previous discussion. So far we have taken tradition to mean two things: an essential *process* for Christian faith, and a fundamental *content* pointing toward the

future. When the theme of this essay employs the term "tradition", therefore, it is referring to a specific confessional document in which tradition in this sense occurs; one text alongside other texts (and other ways in which tradition is an event), so that we should really have to speak here of "traditions", in the plural. The Montreal Faith and Order Conference of 1963 was one which drew attention to this distinction in the ecumenical understanding of tradition¹⁹.

This specific tradition - that of the *Confessio Augustana* - will first be considered as subject in the process of tradition, and particularly with reference to the reception and perpetuation of the ancient doctrine of the church. Next, we consider certain aspects of the history in which it was itself the object of a process of tradition or reception - as it were, aspects of the history of its future. Our special interest here will be the change in its inter-church ecumenical function. Both aspects will be considered in this second section. Thirdly, continuing our reflections on the history of the tradition of the *Confessio Augustana*, something will be said of the possibilities and limits of a new reception of this document today in respect of faith and proclamation.

1. Turning first of all to the *Confessio Augustana* as subject in the process of tradition, only at a first superficial glance at the term "tradition" in the CA does the document appear to be chiefly critical in its approach to the tradition. We encounter the term *traditio* in Article VII and in a rather negative sense, because here it is rejected as a condition of church unity. But the term "human tradition" clearly means here certain church rites, church customs, and the corresponding church regulations. In this area, no uniformity is needed for true church unity. But we must distinguish between these *traditiones humanae* and the church's doctrinal tradition, which clearly plays an important positive role in the *Confessio Augustana*. This comes to expression not merely when the CA emphasizes its agreement with the doctrine of the "catholic church or the church of Rome", as, for example, in the conclusion of the first part²⁰, but is chiefly illustrated by its actual treatment of the ancient doctrine of the church, especially in Articles I and III. Moreover, Luther himself fully shared this high assessment of the dogmatic tradition of the ancient church²¹.

The important point, therefore, is how the ancient church dogma is set in the

light of the Reformation view of redemption and justification, and, on this basis, viewed and interpreted in a new way. This can be more clearly seen in the christological dogma, in particular, than in the doctrine of the Trinity. In Article III of the *Confessio Augustana*, where the christological presentation follows the line of the second article of the Apostles' Creed, there is a clear tendency to stress the reconciliation which took place in Christ's death. The presupposition of this is the divine-humanity of Christ. This christological statement (which is accompanied by one about the sovereignty of the exalted Christ through the Holy Spirit) is also related to Article IV on justification, together with which it constitutes, so to speak, the material center of the doctrinal articles of the *Confessio Augustana*²².

The Augsburg Confession's own approach thus represents a clear demonstration of what was said earlier about the historicity and open-endedness of confession and doctrine. Recognized as authoritative, the doctrine of the ancient church is adopted in such a way that it is interpreted in the light of new experiences in the reading of Holy Scripture for the present time, and in this sense developed further. The fact that christology, originally formulated in the context of Greek thought, had already been transposed into the western Latin universe of discourse and understanding in the medieval period, especially by Anselm, is so to speak confirmed by the *Confessio Augustana*. But this continuation of the process happens in the sense that the whole christological statement is now incorporated into the answer given by the *Confessio Augustana*, in the light of Holy Scripture, to the problem of salvation, a problem which arose particularly acutely in the 16th century.

2. Turning now to the history in which the *Confessio Augustana* itself became the object of a process of tradition or reception, here again we find much more than a mere transmission of an unchanged historical document. From the beginning, the Augsburg Confession was involved in a process of reinterpretation. To a considerable extent, this process also led to an official church continuation of the doctrinal statements formulated in the *Confessio Augustana*. But what is particularly interesting is that in the history of the tradition of the CA, changes also occurred in its function and role in the church.

One such change in function occurred at the very beginning of the history of the tradition of the *Confessio Augustana*. In 1555, the confession of faith which the Lutheran princes presented to the Emperor and Empire in 1530, in demonstration of their doctrinal agreement with the one catholic church, became the document on the basis of which the continued existence of Lutheran territories alongside Roman Catholic territories was legally secured for the whole Empire. As a result, the *Confessio Augustana* became one of the documents to which appeal was made in the constitutions of the Lutheran churches and which was binding on ministers of the Lutheran churches.

But in the 16th century, there was also a material extension of the *Confessio Augustana* in the form of interpretations called forth by doctrinal controversies. I think of the *Apology* and the *Formula of Concord*. The production of the *Book of Concord* led, not only to the declaration of these two interpretations of the CA as binding on Lutheran churches, but also to the acceptance of other writings as valid guidance for the interpretation of the *Confessio Augustana*. These processes show, too, that in the history of the tradition of the CA the official church doctrine is embedded in a doctrinal process and development. The Lutheran churches' irrevocable adherence to the *Confessio Augustana*, in the 16th century at least, included the continuation of the process of doctrinal development and, therefore, a recognition of the limits even of the Augsburg Confession. Although, officially, the doctrinal development of the Lutheran churches came to an end in the 16th century - we shall have to come back for a critical look at this circumstance - nevertheless the history of the CA tradition and of the Lutheran creed in general continued without leaving any deposit in official church doctrine. In this continued process of tradition, the ecumenical change in the function of the *Confessio Augustana* is especially significant, connected as it is with a new look at and a reinterpretation of the substance of the affirmations of the CA. We must now look briefly at this aspect.

3. In the 16th century, the *Confessio Augustana* came to be interpreted increasingly as a document in which the Lutheran church defined itself over against other churches. This tendency was indeed given official confirmation by the church when the Augsburg Confession was included in the *Book of Concord*. The directive that it was to be read in conjunction with the *Smalcald Articles* turned it into a

document which differentiated the Lutheran from the Catholic church. This trend was given sanction throughout the Empire in 1555 and is still quite evident, for example, in the interpretation of the *Confessio Augustana* in the context of the jubilee of 1930²³.

The directive that the Augsburg Confession was to be interpreted in the light of the Formula of Concord also turned it into a document of demarcation over against the Reformed churches, and it was emphatically claimed as such, for example, by the Old Lutherans in Prussia after 1830. Does this mean that the *Confessio Augustana* is for ever saddled with this demarcation function? In actual fact the CA - contrary to the tendency illustrated in the confessional documents of the Lutheran church - has increasingly been seen and understood, too, as a document of ecumenical openness (and this in the direction of both the Reformed and Catholic sides). This was due not least to a new openness to the Holy Scriptures on all sides. So far as Reformed doctrine is concerned, the 1973 Leuenberg Agreement²⁴ concluded a process which was begun at least two centuries ago. But the Leuenberg Agreement in particular shows, too, that a change in function is also connected with a material reinterpretation of those statements which were regarded in the 16th century as dividing the church, and that a corresponding reinterpretation of traditional doctrines was also presupposed on the Reformed side. Discussion with the Catholics shows how, on this side too, the *Confessio Augustana* is now being read and understood as an ecumenically open document, in accordance indeed with its original intention. A reinterpretation of important statements of the *Confessio Augustana* plays a vital role here too.

It is clear from these developments that a doctrinal tradition demonstrates its potentialities for the future to the extent that it proves its openness to changed historical situations and groupings. One and the same tradition in the 16th century necessarily led to demarcations, and in the 20th century to ecumenical approaches, because the churches, theology, the world in general, and thought forms have changed. For many, the problem is then the converse one as to whether such reinterpretations still really preserve the material identity of what the tradition affirms. It is here that controversy has raged and continues to rage over the Leuenberg Agreement. Here is the focus of all sorts of arguments about the Catholic understanding of the *Confessio Augustana*. This question

arises in particular when such a "Catholic" interpretation includes the suggestion that the Lutheran church might adapt itself to the Catholic structure of ministry so that church unity would be no longer merely a confessional unity, but also and above all a structural unity. The problem in this reinterpretation of the confession is fundamentally the same as that in the interpretation of Holy Scripture: If we wish today to say what the tradition said, we must normally say it freshly and differently. We must distinguish between text and tradition, letter and spirit, but without diminishing the identity of substance. Yet the one substance, the one gospel, *itself* points toward the future and surely tends to be constantly new and surprising in its very identity.

4. One further comment is needed in this connection. The new ecumenical look at the Confessio Augustana - as a station on its way into the future - shows the need to allow for a plurality of different official doctrinal traditions in the churches, and the mutual recognition of these traditions as legitimate. But this raises questions about traditional ideas in the approach to the history of doctrine. Even although the organic view of development found in both Catholic and Lutheran 19th century accounts of the history of doctrine is generally considered today as out of date, the conviction that the legitimate way of church doctrine into the future has been and still is via *one particular* church tradition can still continue to be the basis of contemporary views of the history of doctrine.

On the other hand, we must take seriously the insight that, at least since the 16th century, the one gospel goes on its way into the future likewise along different channels of church doctrinal traditions and that, in this coexistence, something of the richness of experiences which preserve the gospel on its way into the future becomes apparent. It is only from this standpoint that we can evaluate the independent doctrinal traditions correctly in new cultural contexts, the confession of the Batak church being a particularly eloquent example here²⁵.

The one gospel, the one saving tradition for the church and for humankind, only remains itself when in its course through history it invades ever new and ever different realms.

IV. THE FUTURE OF THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA AND THE FUTURE OF FAITH

In the history of the tradition of the Confessio Augustana, I have particularly emphasized the process which has led to an ecumenical reappraisal of this document. Although this process must of course be understood as a fruit of the general ecumenical movement of the churches, it is certain that, theologically speaking, there has also been a mutual reinterpretation of the different traditions in the light of a new and shared attention to Holy Scripture. But it may well be asked whether the ecumenical future which opens up here is not oriented far too much on the theological questions of the past. Have we as yet dispelled the scepticism referred to at the outset, the suspicion of a "retrograde ecumenism" (also referred to in connection with the Leuenberg Agreement)?

When we ask here about the "future of a tradition" - *this* tradition - there is still another aspect to be considered. We have to ask what future the Confessio Augustana has in face of the challenges confronting our world today. How does this Confession help us to declare anew the saving tradition of the gospel of God's action in Jesus Christ in a changed world? And why is it important, even essential, for the church to know itself dependent on earlier dogmatic texts for its present interpretation of the Scriptures? These are questions which equally affect other doctrinal traditions, and there is much to be said for the view that our new ecumenical openness for one another only makes sense and finds its purpose when the churches face these challenges together.

These questions pinpoint a problem whose solution depends above all on giving full weight in our interpretation to the structural limits and historicity of every church confession, to which we have already drawn attention. For even the Confessio Augustana is a document the purpose of which was to formulate a church consensus only in respect of certain essential points of the Christian faith, in response to specific 16th century questions and expressed in the categories and thought-forms of the time. At the same time, of course, the document claims to point out the indispensable perspective which must characterize all Christian faith and proclamation.

1. In actual fact, this is the perspective by which the future of this tradition

is decided. The *Confessio Augustana* (as the Lutheran confession) is pervaded by the perspective of the doctrine of justification to such an extent that the future of the whole document depends on the future of *this* doctrine. The commitment of the Lutheran church in its confession of faith is essentially and above all its commitment to this perspective. This is not to say of course that certain quite specific contemporary problems of the 16th century are not also reflected and answered in the formulation of Article IV, for example, problems which in this form are no longer *our* problems. Nor is everything that would need to be said about God's act of justification in the light of the Bible witness presented here *in extenso*. We need also to remember the markedly juridical coloring in the version here presented of our relationship to God in the doctrine of justification; according to biblical testimony, this represents only one possible way among many of presenting this relationship. Moreover, the account of sin in Article II, a decisively material presupposition closely connected with Article IV, is based on a historical view of the fall of Adam which is no longer acceptable to the contemporary historical sense.

Nevertheless, Article IV (above all in conjunction with Article II) sets humanity and human salvation in a perspective to ignore which would mean ignoring the New Testament gospel itself. In face of the dangers threatening humankind today from without and within, and in face of the variety of forms in which "salvation" is offered to humankind today, this perspective keeps its contemporary relevance undiminished.

Let me clarify that. Article IV (and II) views humanity in its deepest and most essential being as defined by its transcendental dimension, by its existence *coram Deo*. It directs Christian proclamation today and in the future to remind humanity of this dimension, and to help to ensure in every possible way that this divine dimension may once again become a living reality for human beings. We are aware, of course, that there are interpretations of Scripture in which this transcendental dimension of human existence is faded out; in relation to such interpretations, CA IV can make a really decisive contribution to biblical exegesis. Article IV (and II) insists, moreover, on the fact that the failure of human existence occurs in the area of our relationship to God, that the deepest threat to humanity derives from the human desire to see ourselves as the supreme being,

from the fact that we have forgotten how to be thankful, to be completely humble, to wait; that we have saddled ourselves with a burden of achievement which threatens our complete ruination.

Article IV (and II) also insists that there is deliverance for humanity only if we *experience* a new meaning, submit ourselves to the gift of grace which alone can overcome that deepest alienation of guilt and which alone can set us free, not least, to serve our neighbor.

These are perspectives the Confessio Augustana seeks to maintain. In face of the fatal modern emancipation, it contains a truly revolutionary doctrine of humanity. Nor is this a peculiarly Lutheran doctrine, but an offer, and a question to the whole ecumenical family as to whether the truth attested in the Bible is a living reality within it, deeply enough; namely, the truth of humanity in the presence of God.

2. But the meaning of the Confessio Augustana for the future of faith, opening up the Scriptures to us, is derived not only from this perspective under which the whole document stands. Just as this perspective has its inevitable implications for many other affirmations of faith, so too the other articles of the Confession, when rightly interpreted, include directives for faith and the future. I shall mention two examples:

In Article I, the Confessio Augustana offers clarifications about the divinity of God. This again touches on one of the supremely central questions for a responsible Christian faith today. In view of modern atheism, the question of God is a most urgent one. But in a different, though no less urgent way it is also a central question for the encounter of Christianity with the faith in God of other non-Christian religions. What pointer to the future does the Confessio Augustana offer in this situation? In this article, the ancient church doctrine of the Trinity is explicitly adopted. We should remember in our interpretation that this "community language" cannot possibly do justice to the variety of ways of witnessing to God in the church. Even in respect of the doctrine of the Trinity itself, all we are given is certain boundary markers; the fulness of what would have to be affirmed here on the basis of the confession of faith is

not even hinted at (for example, about the relationship of Christ and Spirit, the immanent and the economic Trinity). The doctrine of the Trinity offered in Article I simply repeats the statements which had onesidedly emphasized the response of the ancient church at a particular time: the equal eternity of Father, Son, and Spirit. And it does so using the concepts of Greek and Latin antiquity, as the term *persona* in particular demonstrates. If this article is to be more than a museum piece, if it is to have a real future as an instrument of the Good News of great joy to all people, it needs to be reconsidered and reinterpreted. But assuming this to be done, this article, too, is a vital assistance and pointer to true attentiveness to the message of the Bible.

What points would need consideration? Let me mention three at least. Traditional talk of the one God in three persons reminds us to speak of God concretely in the midst of the contemporary struggle between world views; to speak in Christian terms and not in abstract philosophical terms; in other words, to speak of God as none other than he who entered this world in Christ. How important this is is clear, for example, in relation to the atheistic argument that faith in God is excluded by the suffering of the world. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us to speak of God as of him who in Christ underwent suffering and death. Concrete Christian talk of God is, moreover, one of the essential material presuppositions for the total perspective formulated in Articles III and IV, of which I spoke earlier. At the same time, however, it is obvious that Article I used concepts from Greek philosophical theology in order to describe God's divinity. The suggestions contained here include the very up-to-date one that we would do well not to reject outright what is said about God in the non-Christian sphere. All that needs to be done is to set these insights deliberately within the new context of Christian, trinitarian, language about God.

As a further example, I take Article XVI, in which statements are made concerning the social and political responsibility of Christians. In this article in particular, as has often been pointed out, the historical context of the CA statements becomes more than ordinarily oppressive for our understanding today. It may even be asked whether Article XVI still has anything at all to say to us today, with its image of authority and its notions of political life, with its tendentious opposition to a false flight from the world and its summons to total obedience.

When we speak of social responsibility today, we must bear in mind the present social situation, completely different from that of the 16th century, and put the emphasis in different places than did the *Confessio Augustana* in Article XVI. But even this article rests on insights which are still fundamental for a faith guided by the biblical witness, and it therefore contains pointers to action which make the *Confessio Augustana* even here pregnant for the future. For example, the following points are important. The positive spiritual and theological interpretation of state power: The *Confessio Augustana* directs us to distinguish between what state power can achieve and the goal and mode of operation of the gospel. This distinction, behind which stands the Lutheran "two kingdoms doctrine", must be recognized and affirmed today, even when at the same time we are challenged to develop more boldly those connecting lines which are at all events indicated in Article XVI in the exhortation to love in the secular structures. Finally, there is the very clear statement that a Christian must reject all illegitimate totalitarian claims on the part of the state.

As these two examples show, even the explanations of the individual articles of the *Confessio Augustana* can provide substantial guidance for responsible confession, proclamation, and action today and in the future. There are pointers which can, therefore, legitimately have authority for us, pointing as they do to aspects of the biblical witness which must not be forgotten in future confession, proclamation, and action on the part of the church. The way forward is thus opened also for the one gospel which the *Confessio Augustana* itself conveys, the way into that future which the *Confessio Augustana* itself intends, along which the continuity of the one truth is found only on the road which ends in the visible fullness of that truth. We can listen truly to all these directives, therefore, only if we give heed to those hermeneutical standpoints, mentioned a number of times before, which sometimes even require us to reserve our position in respect of certain details.

3. In addition, however, there is a final question addressed to the Lutheran churches. Our churches recognize their bond with the ancient creed of the church and the Lutheran confessions of the Reformation, and their ministers are required to subscribe to these confessions. But what is really being done by the Lutheran churches to interpret these obligations reasonably and authoritatively?

We have seen (cf. again Article XVI as an example) how much interpretation is needed if the Lutheran churches are to be a meaningful aid to proclamation today and tomorrow. If they are left to their own devices here, and to the aid of a few professors of theology, pastors not infrequently decide to leave the 16th century confessional documents well alone. Others practice a confessional scholasticism which reveals little trace of hermeneutical reflection and at the same time produces the corresponding results in the life of the church.

Must not the Lutheran churches discover ways and means of complementing their confessions by an official, binding interpretation? Perhaps the first thing to be done here will be the creation of the proper instrumentalities. The Roman Catholic Church would seem to have been wiser here when it decided, for example, to extend the interpretation of the First Vatican Council by holding the Second Vatican Council, and the interpretation of the Tridentine and even earlier decisions by both these Councils. Only in some such way would justice also be done to the widespread call for binding doctrine in our churches to which we referred at the beginning of this essay. This would have to be done in such a way that what would shine forth would be not the text as such, but the apostolic tradition conveyed in it - not the letter, but the spirit. But it is this spirit, this true apostolic tradition alone, which leads our church - and the whole church of Christ - into the future, and this one tradition, therefore, which alone has any future.

NOTES

1. Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit* (Munich: R. Piper & Co., 1947), p. 838, cited from: Josef Pieper, *Ueberlieferung: Begriff und Anspruch* (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1970), p. 32.
2. G. Krüger, "Die Bedeutung der Tradition für die philosophische Forschung", *Studium Generale*, Vol. 4, 1951, p. 325, cited from Josef Pieper (see n. 1), p. 33.
3. Cf. Ladislaus Martin Pákozdy, "Einheit im Rückwärtsgang? Der Bibel mehr Gewicht geben als dem Dogma", *Lutherische Monatshefte*, Vol. 16, No. 8, 1977, pp. 476-478; Anna Marie Aagard, "Die Traditionen müssen umlernen: Wem nützen ungeschichtliche Vereinigungsbestrebungen?", *Lutherische Monatshefte*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1978, pp. 100-101.

4. Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin (New Testament Library; London: SCM Press, 1966), p. 101.
5. Cf. Wiard Popkes, *Christus traditus: Eine Untersuchung zum Begriff der Dahingabe im Neuen Testament* (Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments; Zurich/Stuttgart: Zwingli-Verlag, 1967).
6. Max Thurian, *The Eucharistic Memorial, Part I: The Old Testament*, trans. J.G. Davies (Ecumenical Studies in Worship No. 7; London: Lutterworth Press, 1960), p. 19. For a criticism of the interpretation of the term "anamnesis" by Joachim Jeremias (op. cit. [see n. 4], pp. 237-255), cf. Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Keitch, ed. George W. MacRae, S.J., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 198-199.
7. Johann Baptist Metz, *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Studien zu einer praktischen Fundamentaltheologie* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1978²), pp. 77 ff., and 176 ff.
8. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, "Tradition III. Systematisch", *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1965²), Vol. 10, col. 293.
9. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol. II: The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (Study Edition; London: SCM Press, 1975), p. vi.
10. *ibid.*, p. 321.
11. Edmund Schlink, "The Structure of Dogmatic Statements as an Ecumenical Problem", *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, (Edinburgh/London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 30.
12. The development of the primitive Christian confession cited in 1 Corinthians 15:3 f. into the ancient church baptismal confession of faith is described in detail in Karl Lehmann, *Auferweckt am dritten Tage gemäss der Schrift: Früheste Christologie Bekenntnisbildung und Schriftauslegung im Lichte von 1. Kor. 15,3-5* (Quaestiones disputatae 38; Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1968); cf. also Peter Brunner, "Wesen und Funktion von Glaubensbekenntnissen", *Veraltetes Glaubensbekenntnis?*, ed. Peter Brunner/Gerhard Friedrich/Karl Lehmann/Joseph Ratzinger (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1968), pp. 7 ff.
13. Karl Rahner, "What is a Dogmatic Statement", *Theological Investigations, Vol. 5: Later Writings*, trans. Karl-H. Krüger

(Baltimore: Helicon Press / London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), p. 54; cf. *idem*, "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church", *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 11: *Confrontations 1*, trans. David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman & Todd / New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 14 ff., or, for a different translation of the same article, "Pluralism in Theology and the Oneness of the Church's Profession of Faith", trans. John Drury, *Concilium*, Vol. 46: *The Development of Fundamental Theology*, ed. Johannes B. Metz (New York: Paulist Press, 1969), pp. 114 ff.

14. It was pointed out in the discussion that there is a limit in the verbal form of the confession as such, since every verbal form of Christian witness cannot fully cover the intended subject matter. This nevertheless does not rule out that a substantial clarity belongs to the verbal witness (and therefore to the church confession as well) in which the meaning is articulated for us human beings in an adequate way. On this problem, cf. Karl Rahner, "What is a Dogmatic Statement" (see n. 13), pp. 54 ff.
15. Walter Kasper, "Bekenntnis und Bekenntnisgemeinschaft in katholischer Sicht", *Confessio Augustana: Bekenntnis des einen Glaubens. Gemeinsame Untersuchung lutherischer und katholischer Theologen*, ed. Harding Meyer and Heinz Schütte (Frankfurt: Otto Lembeck / Paderborn: Bonifacius Druckerei, 1980), p. 27.
16. Walter Kasper, *Dogma unter dem Wort Gottes* (Mainz: 1965), p. 128.
17. Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Norm 8, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer, and Arthur Piepkorn (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 465.
18. Cf. e.g., Joseph Ratzinger, "Prognosen für die Zukunft des Oekumenismus", *Bausteine für die Einheit der Christen: Arbeitsblätter des Bundes für evang.-kath. Wiedervereinigung*, Vol. 17, 1977, No. 65, pp. 6-14; *idem*, "Anmerkungen zur Frage einer 'Anerkennung' der Confessio Augustana durch die katholische Kirche", *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 29, 1978, pp. 225-237; so, too, Walter Kasper, "Bekenntnis und Bekenntnisgemeinschaft" (see n. 15), pp. 43 ff.
19. Cf. the report of Section II of this Conference, "Scripture, Tradition and Traditions", *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: The Report from Montreal 1963*, ed. P.C. Rodger and L. Vischer (Faith and Order Paper No. 42; London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 50-61.
20. *The Book of Concord* (see n. 17), p. 47.

21. Cf. especially "On the Councils and the Church, 1539", *Luther's Works*, Vol. 41 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 3-178. On this, cf. J. Koopmans, *Das altkirchliche Dogma in der Reformation* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1955).
22. Peter Brunner is of the opinion that Article IV is the center of the first part of the Augsburg Confession (and especially of Articles I-XVII), but that "when it comes to the essentials dealt with in these 17 articles, the most important article is the christological one (III) and not Article IV dealing with justification" ("Die ökumenische Bedeutung der Confessio Augustana", *Katholische Anerkennung des Augsburgischen Bekenntnisses?*, ed. Harding Meyer et al. [Ökumenische Perspektiven, Vol. 9; Frankfurt: Otto Lembeck, 1977], p. 122). Brunner talks of Article III being "the main article" (*ibid.*, p. 124) and states: "Article III is decisive for the recognition of the ecumenical significance which is attributed to the Confessio Augustana. One can perhaps dare to formulate the following thesis: If one really accepts the implications for faith in Article III, one cannot say 'no' to Articles I and II, or to Articles IV to XV." (*ibid.*, p. 125).
23. For example, Karl Thieme, *Die Augsburgische Konfession und Luthers Katechismen auf theologische Gegenwartswerte untersucht* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1930); Rudolf Hermann, "Zur theologischen Würdigung der Augustana", *Luther-Jahrbuch 1930*, Vol. XII, pp. 162-214.
24. For the text of the Leuenberg Agreement, see *Lutheran World*, Vol. XX, No. 4, 1973, pp. 347-360.
25. *Confession of Faith of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant: Approved by the Great Synod at Sipoholon, November 28-30, 1951* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963).

THE DISCUSSION: APPROACHES TO THIS REAPPRAISAL

Apart from the main addresses and the ensuing comments, the really important emphasis of the consultation was on the group discussions. Clearly only approaches to a reappraisal of the problems of the confession in the Lutheran churches were here proposed and not solutions. At any rate, an effort was made to strive for important pointers for the clarification of the historical as well as the substantial problems in respect of the *Confessio Augustana*. The groups were sufficiently representative to be able to bring to expression in a suitable way the whole range of theological and contextual situations.

The questions proposed for treatment by the groups resulted from correspondence with the Lutheran churches and from various studies and joint theological efforts. We were able to make available to the participants three important documents from these prepared studies: a) the documentation of a study group in the USA, "The Augsburg Confession in the United States"¹; b) documentation from a Scandinavian Consultation on "The Confession in the Folk Church", Sigtuna, Sweden, May 2-4, 1979²; and c) a report of the VELKD (United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany) March 1979 consultation on "The Significance and Function of the *Confessio Augustana* Today"³. While it is true that most of the participants only became familiar with this material at the conference itself, people who had assisted in compiling these reports from the different churches were among the participants and naturally shared their concerns in the group discussions.

The group reports printed in this volume vary in style and in method, but it seemed valuable for a continued study to retain these diversities. Some readers will obviously discover gaps, especially as concerns historical details or theological questions. This is quite inevitable in a randomly composed group. We did not constitute "specialized groups" in the strict sense, but the composition of the groups did determine the information contributed.

The reader is therefore requested not to look for a complete historical and theological treatment. Instead, one group report indicates some lines of historical development which are based - presumably for the first time - on the encounter

between representatives of the traditional (European and North American) churches and those of the "younger" churches. Some amazing parallel historical developments will be noted and certainly come as a great surprise. Further study will have to be devoted to them.

The problems of the interpretation of the *Confessio Augustana* was also discussed in one group. The historical outline, though incomplete, will pose questions to theology as well as to the churches who live with this confession. With concrete examples, the report seeks to relate the problem of interpretation to the basic question of authority in the church. This specific problem leads to the question of the authority (or validity) of the *Confessio Augustana* in the Lutheran churches - the subject of the third report - and is pushed deeper to become a question of its binding character. Whereas the factual (variously characterized) "validity" is posed as a question of conscience in the tradition of the Lutheran churches, in the question of the binding character it is a matter of the relation to contemporary interpretation in reference to specific situations. The movement, then, is away from a static to a dynamic view of "validity" and "binding character".

The distance of time and the transformation in the life of the churches and the world poses questions to the historical confession which lead some to the conclusion that the *Confessio Augustana* is of no help in solving our contemporary problems. The task of one group, therefore, was to investigate the questions being raised today. Its report emphasizes only some (though decisive and central) aspects from the *Confessio Augustana*. It shows the extent to which precisely this text of the past offers approaches for a renewed reflection. It is impossible therefore - as we are sometimes tempted - simply to set the traditional text to one side and seek a solution on our own resources. The basic continuity in face of the questions of humanity and God, and in face of political and social tasks, have been approached in a way which fruitfully relates the historical evidence to the contemporary discussion. This slant also becomes particularly essential when it is a matter of providing answers to the specific problems of the so-called Third World. Although the "context" of these churches is different from that which produced the "text" of the *Confessio Augustana*, amazing implications are forthcoming for even more profound study. The problems which have been presented in the narrative style of the report from the Third

World are not at all alien for the contemporary problems in other parts of the world and call for common exchange and mutual aid in the interpretation of the *Confessio Augustana*.

Several reports touch on ecumenical problems and offer approaches as to how use can be made of the *Confessio Augustana* in a divided Christendom. The special problem of a Catholic "recognition" of the *Confessio Augustana* as a problem for the Lutheran churches was the theme of another group. In a discussion which constantly developed more broadly, our consultation dealt with one special aspect, namely, how the Lutheran churches would be affected by such a possible recognition and, not least, how they can relate to such a discussion. Since the question of "recognition" was treated primarily as a challenge to the Lutheran churches themselves, it was possible for it to have a legitimate place in an internal Lutheran discussion. The report shows that the Lutheran churches have different approaches to the whole issue and do not all feel the same urgency of the question.

The reports published here are intended in one way or another to be of use in study programs which are being carried out within the Lutheran churches in view of the jubilee celebrations of the *Confessio Augustana* and which reflect afresh on life under a confession, life with the inherited confession, and concrete confession today. We may speak of a certain "randomness" in these reports, but they are nevertheless not unimportant "occasional products", but the result of a twelve-hour exchange in groups and almost as much time again formulating the results. The effort expended is not inconsiderable. Therefore the approaches have to be deepened still further as concrete stimuli in local studies. (VV)

NOTES

1. See *Currents in Theology and Mission*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April 1980, pp. 69-123.
2. Available from: KISA, PO Box 297, 751 05 Uppsala, Sweden.
3. Available from: Lutherisches Kirchenamt der VELKD, Postfach 150409, 3000 Hanover 31, Federal Republic of Germany.

THE HISTORICAL RECEPTION AND USE OF THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA IN DOCTRINE AND PREACHING

Leader of the Group: Tibor Fabiny; Recorder: Dieter Schuch

1. The Augsburg Confession and the Theological and Political Tensions of the 16th Century

The spiritual movement of the Reformation, which spread to all classes of society in Europe, began with the publication of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses (1517). Henceforward, the gospel was in many places proclaimed in a new way. But toward the end of the 1520s, visitations made it clear that great uncertainty and disorder still existed in forms of life and worship in the congregations. The urgent need was felt to state clearly the contents of the Christian faith as understood by the Reformation. At the same time, the Imperial Diet summoned to meet in Augsburg in 1530 also required an unambiguous statement of this kind. This saw the light of day and entered history in the shape of the Augsburg Confession.

Composed by Melanchthon on the basis of preliminary work, and approved by Luther, the Augsburg Confession was signed by German princes and cities and presented to the Emperor at the Diet in Augsburg. Besides its supremely theological significance, it enjoyed from the very outset a considerable political significance. Its purpose, on the one hand, was to justify evangelical reforms which had already been introduced, to promote the renewal of the whole church, and to maintain its unity and, on the other hand, to help to ensure that the unity of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, threatened by the Turks, remained intact. The interests of religion, political concerns, and the protection of their own possessions - these were the determinative factors in the action of the princes and the Imperial Diet.

In 1537, the Confessio Augustana together with the Apology became the confession of the Smalcald League, an alliance of the princes, and in 1555 it acquired legal status within the Empire. From now on, the princes determined what the religious confession of their subjects should be. The progress of the Reformation had in the early years been that of a genuine popular movement; now it became

far too dependent on decisions taken by the princes. It should be noted, however, that, in the exercise of their responsibility, the princes often acted as Christians and as leading members of their churches.

2. The Reception of the Confessio Augustana outside Germany

In this section we offer some information as to when and in what circumstances churches in certain other countries adopted the Confessio Augustana. [The following examples have been chosen at random and reflect the composition of the group, but they nevertheless give a good general idea of the development, and also a generally valid conclusion. - Ed.]

The *Scandinavian* countries were early to recognize and welcome the Reformation, and here the Confessio Augustana became the official confession of the churches along with Luther's Small Catechism. (In Sweden, however, this did not occur until 1593.) In *Denmark*, the Confession was adopted in 1537/1539. As early as 1530 there had been a local confession (*Confessio Hafniensis*). In *France*, the Confessio Augustana was mentioned in 1802 in the title of the evangelical church formed by the union of the territorial churches, but appears in a church constitution only from 1872 onward. In *Strasbourg* and *Alsace*, then part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation, the Augsburg Confession was adopted in 1536 in connection with the Wittenberg Concord. In the *Hungary* of those days, many pastors accepted the Confessio Augustana as their confession of faith from 1535 onward, but political circumstances made the official introduction of this confession inadvisable. Local confessions were formulated instead (*Confessio Pentapolitana*, 1549; *Confessio Heptapolitana*, 1559; *Confessio Scepusiana*, 1569).

The confessional patterns developed in Europe were carried overseas by the many Protestants who emigrated to *North America*. The Lutheran churches which came into being there reflect the different views of the confessions and their authority within the European mother churches.

The Lutheran churches founded by the missionary societies in the countries of *Africa* and *Asia* at first used only Luther's Small Catechism, in addition to the Bible, as the standard of doctrine and belief. The Confessio Augustana was

adopted relatively late by a few churches, although it had always been cherished even before this official recognition. In 1928 it was introduced into *China* as the confession of the five Lutheran churches there, and in 1950 into Madagascar, these all being churches strongly influenced by the *Confessio Augustana* previously. The Augsburg Confession had a deep influence on the theological thinking of the evangelical churches in *Indonesia*, but was not given constitutional recognition. The Batak Protestant Christian Church in particular, although the fruit of a mission with a strong Lutheran orientation, did not accept the *Confessio Augustana* when it achieved independence, but wrote its own confession of faith (1951) which is addressed to the special situation of this church vis-à-vis other churches, splinter groups, ideologies, and traditional popular religions. In a few African countries, too, in *Cameroon* for example, this process is still incomplete. In most cases, the *Confessio Augustana* became the official confession of the younger Lutheran churches from the moment of their attaining independence.

From what has been said in sections 1 and 2 above, we note the following striking parallel in the process of the reception of the *Confessio Augustana*. Both the *initial formulation* and the *later reception* of the doctrinal statement in the different ecclesiastical areas took place in every case only after a more or less long period of time in which there was already biblical proclamation and instruction (catechesis); the Bible was made accessible to the congregations by translations; and the Reformation interpretation of the gospel was imprinted in worship and church order. From a historical standpoint, the *Confessio Augustana* itself served *only in the second place as a rallying document, as the didactic concentration* of a rich evangelical life and teaching (and in the third place as a means of securing uniformity).

3. The Augsburg Confession in the Development of Church History

Although the *Confessio Augustana* is the fruit of a long historical credal development, it does not mark the end of this development. Before, during, and after its formulation, there were a number of Reformation confessions and sets of theses. In 1530 not only the *Confessio Augustana* was presented, but also the *Tetrapolitana*, the confession of four southern German cities. This was also the occasion which prompted Zwingli to write his *Ratio Fidei*. There seems nothing

unusual about the continued work on the confessional writings after 1530, with the formulation of arguments, additions, and variants. Not even the *Confessio Augustana* itself was unalterable. Where it should be enforced and in what form was decided by the princes, meetings of the estates, and the magistrates. Only in a few countries (Poland, for example) was the decision made by a synod in this very early period of the Reformation.

It was only gradually that regional synods were established, especially late in the German countries (except for Cleve, Mark, and Ravensberg). The development of the Confession reached its final stage on the Lutheran side with the publication of the Book of Concord (1580). Since then the *Augustana Invariata* has been virtually authoritative in the teaching of the Lutheran churches. The Reformed churches (known at that time as the Helvetic branch of the Reformation) had in the main also accepted the *Confessio Augustana* - not least with the aim of securing their legal recognition in the Empire as a whole - but in its variant form, the *Augustana Variata*. Most of these Reformed churches subsequently abandoned this document, although Calvin himself approved of the *Augustana*.

In the Roman Catholic Church there was no explicit doctrinal formulation binding on priests, who were under vows of obedience to their bishops. After the Reformation, however, the *Confessio Augustana* or (and) other Lutheran confessions were made binding on every Lutheran pastor at ordination. The Augsburg Confession, together with other confessions, has undoubtedly protected Lutheranism for centuries from many (if not from all) mistaken paths, and is still indispensable even today, particularly in the training of pastors and teachers. When we remember the gradual process by which the *Confessio Augustana* came into existence, however, it becomes clear that its statements must be translated in every new period. In order to be able to answer new questions and to respond to new challenges, it must continue to be written.

4. Translations of the Confessio Augustana

Since it was first composed, the *Confessio Augustana* has been translated from the original German and Latin into many other languages, and it has been published in countless countries. We give some examples from non-German speaking countries:

Hungary: First Hungarian version appeared as early as the 16th century. Since then a further 11 editions have appeared, the latest in 1957; editions also in Latin, German, and Slovak.

France: First appearance in French in 1561, then a further 14 times; also Latin and German editions.

North America: Since 1828 countless editions have been published in various languages in North America, latterly for the most part in the context of the Book of Concord.

China: Four editions in Chinese since 1928.

Madagascar: Three editions in the indigenous language.

Indonesia: Version in the Batak language in 1968 and in Indonesian in 1978.

We are informed that new editions and translations are being prepared in many countries in connection with the 450th anniversary of the *Confessio Augustana*. It would be desirable for a comprehensive survey to be published in the jubilee year of 1980 showing the contemporary distribution of the Confession in the different languages and countries and giving details of the number of editions and the size of printings.

5. The Confessio Augustana in the Life of the Lutheran Churches

In general, little attention has been paid to the *Confessio Augustana* in recent decades (as is also the case with the other confessional writings, apart from the *Small Catechism*). This state of affairs can in part be explained by pointing out that the *Confessio Augustana* presented to the Emperor was originally intended chiefly for theological discussion and not for use in congregations. It was formulated with this specific aim in view.

The *Confessio Augustana* has nevertheless proved its capacity to clarify the doctrinal understanding of many congregations all over the world and to help them

to achieve clarity as to their doctrinal identity. Its continuing capacity to do this is shown by the following examples: Some Lutheran churches mention the Augsburg Confession in their titles (Austria, Alsace and Lorraine, Siebenbürgen). Other churches have been deeply influenced by the *Confessio Augustana*, and others are discovering more and more how important it is as a guide.

With the idea of making the Confession more familiar to German-speaking congregations, the VELKD (United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany) has recently published a new edition with a revised and more easily intelligible text. Explanatory letters for the use of the congregations are also included.

It is to be hoped that similar projects will help other churches, too (in Sweden and France, for example), to overcome the attitude of ignorance and hostility which to some extent still prevails among many pastors and church members. This attitude is largely to be explained by the absence of a sense of history, which has led to an anti-confessional, anti-orthodox, and anti-doctrinal mood. It is important to make clear, therefore:

1. That the contemporary interest in the *Confessio Augustana* is not meant to encourage an ossification of traditional confessional lines, but rather to open up new opportunities of ecumenical dialog;
2. That no healthy congregational life is possible without sound doctrine, which also has its roots, necessarily, in the tradition of the fathers;
3. That clear doctrinal formulations are an aid to personal faith and witness.

Finally, in answer to those who fear that confessional documents might come to dominate church life overmuch, it should be stressed that we must continue to regard the Bible of the Old and New Testaments as the *norma normans*, and the authority of a confessional document only as a *norma normata*, as a signpost and aid to the understanding of the Scriptures.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA IN PAST AND PRESENT

Leader of the Group: Carter Lindberg; Recorders: Ralph Quere and Merlyn Satrom

The discussion of this group can be summarized in the following theses and questions:

A. Hermeneutical Principles Related to the Context of the Confessio Augustana

1. The intention of the Confessio Augustana was to confess the doctrine of clear Scriptures for the sake of the true unity of the church, Catholic identity, and continuity; in later times, the Confession became a hermeneutical guide to the interpretation of Scripture, a doctrinal norm (*Lehnorm*), a badge of Lutheran identity (distinguishing Lutherans from other Christians), and a political platform.

Question 1: Under what conditions might the Confessio Augustana serve to unite Christians, given the history of its interpretation and the resulting divisions?

Question 2: To what extent is it possible that there be a significant dialog between the Confessio Augustana and church members today with minimal knowledge of the Confession's historical content?

B. Hermeneutical Principles Drawn from Examples from the History of the Confessio Augustana's Interpretation

2. The Confessio Augustana has its defence and initial interpretation in the Apology. Subsequent interpretation in the Smalcald Articles, The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, and the Formula of Concord are as much supplements as interpretations, discussing questions not dealt with in the Confessio Augustana or answering controverted questions which arose after 1530. Thus these later confessions should not be read back into the Augsburg Confession, nor should they be ignored in interpreting the Confession; rather they should be regarded as commentary on and exposition and development of CA doctrine and the teachings of the Reformers.

Question 3: Is the Confessio Augustana to be understood primarily in light of Luther's or Melancthon's theology? (16th century examples: Calvin, the Variata, the Philippists; 19th century examples: J.W. Richards v. F. Bente)

Question 4: Does the Confessio Augustana have primacy among the Lutheran confessions or must it be interpreted by the Formula of Concord?

3. The 17th century Aristotelian epistemology and causality, as well as the *loci* method, results in a new way of doing confessional theology which, in fact, constituted a new hermeneutic for interpreting the Confessio Augustana.

4. The 17th century interest in architectonic structure, analysis of infinitesimal detail, and patient repetition of theological themes characterizes the theology of the Baroque era. Orthodoxy also gives a greater authority to the Confessio Augustana as exemplified in the concept of *norma normata*.

5. The reaction of 17th and 18th century Pietists to Orthodox confessionalism resulted in the use of the Confessio Augustana primarily as a badge of Lutheran identity (e.g., Muhlenberg in America and foreign missionaries in the Third World).

6. The Pietists' insistence on the right of private interpretation of Scripture and their pitting of the Bible and sometimes the confessions against Orthodox dogmatics contributed to the historical critical method. Thus the way was opened for later critical studies of the Confessio Augustana.

7. The rationalism of the 18th century, growing out of both Orthodoxy and Pietism, ignored and neglected the Confessio Augustana because of its scepticism and rejection of the supernatural.

8. The 19th century reaction to rationalism and "unionism" caused confessionals to emphasize the Formula of Concord as *the* Lutheran interpretation of the Confessio Augustana. Persecution and minority status resulted in the establishment of a "new" authority by reaffirming the 16th century confessions and reprising 17th century Orthodox theology. Some "old Lutherans" made the entire Book of Concord a badge of identity.

9. There are a variety of confessional hermeneutics in the 20th century rooted in various theological, ecclesiastical, and cultural factors, e.g.: a) primarily finding propositional truth in the *Confessio Augustana* interpreted or supplemented by the whole Book of Concord; b) focusing on justification as the center and hermeneutical key to the Confession; c) looking to the theology of the young Luther (or to Melancthon's theology) as the interpretive principle of the *Confessio Augustana*; d) emphasizing the possibility of the Augsburg Confession serving to reunite the divided churches; e) asserting the primacy of biblical exegesis over confessional formulations of the *Confessio Augustana*; or f) utilizing modern world views to reinterpret or even displace CA doctrines.

C. Hermeneutical Principles Related to a Two-Kingdom Doctrine

10. The *Confessio Augustana*'s structure exhibits an implicit right hand (Articles VII-XIV) and left hand (Article XVI) kingdom doctrine. This permits a two-kingdom perspective as a hermeneutic for understanding the relation of church and state (which are *not* to be equated with the two kingdoms!): for example, the 16th century prince as "emergency bishop" on the basis of their baptism even more than their office (*Amt*); the 19th century "old Lutheran" confessionalist resistance of the state's incursion into church doctrine; and the developments tending to separate church and state into autonomous realms - Jefferson in 18th century America, Bismarck in 19th century Germany.

D. Hermeneutical Principles Complicating the Understanding of the Ministry

11. As a result of two different ways of looking at the *Confessio Augustana* (e.g.: Vilmar and Kliefoth v. Hoefling; Loehe and Grabau v. Walther) two dramatically different understandings of the office of the ministry have emerged: the representative and the so-called functional views. The representative view is often understood as giving ministers a higher status (*ordo*). The so-called functional view is seen as more amenable to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

E. Hermeneutical Principles Growing out of the Structure of the Confessio Augustana

12. The *Confessio Augustana* is to be interpreted by interrelating its doctrine

in a constellation, rather than interpreting it from the perspective of a single article as the center or starting point. This constellation is a complex dialectic of numerous theological insights: e.g., the relationship of Articles III and IV on *propter Christum*; the relationship of Articles III, IV, and V on the Holy Spirit; the relationship of Articles V and XIV on the ordering of the church which followed from an understanding of the office of the ministry (*Predigtamt*).

Interpreting an historical document is also done through the interpreter's understanding of a constellation of theological, cultural, doctrinal, and philosophical themes, ideas, and presuppositions (e.g., a constellation of the theology of the Lutheran Reformers, Luther's theology, Melancthon's theology, etc.).

Question 5: In light of Melancthon's alteration and synthesis of available patterns (e.g., Luther's 1528 "Great Confession", the Marburg and the Schwabach Articles) what influence did the Roman pattern of his 1521 *Loci Communes*, or the creed, or the traditional sequence of dogmatic texts have upon his arrangement of the first 17 articles of the *Confessio Augustana*?

F. Hermeneutical Principles Related to the Broader Question of Authority in the Church

13. Contemporary discussions of authority as it relates to teaching and ordering the church concern the following: biblical inerrancy and infallibility; the infallible teaching office (*magisterium*) of the papacy; the possible roles of a truly ecumenical council; the councils of the WCC, the LWF, national churches, national councils, or synodal conventions; the reliance upon bishops, presidents, or superintendents; the place of professional theologians or charismatics (neo-Pentecostals). A central issue for the group concerned the limits within which contemporary theology and the interpretation of the *Confessio Augustana* legitimately operates.

Question 6: Given the problems of doctrinal authority and ecclesiastical structure (an adiaphoron?) that plague modern Lutherans, how do we arrive at sufficient consensus or concord in our teachings without submitting to an infallible magisterium (whether scriptural, ecclesiastical, or cultural)?

THE AUTHORITY OF THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES

Leader of the Group: Georg Kretschmar; Recorder: Helmut Zeddies

The working group tackled the theme from the following standpoints: tradition and life; confession and binding doctrine; and self-examination and reflection in the ecumenical context.

1. *Tradition and Life*

a) In what sense is the Confessio Augustana authoritative in the Lutheran churches? In view of the extremely juridical view of "authority" (or "validity"), it may be better to speak of the role, influence, and use of the Confessio Augustana. The legal aspect, while not being excluded, would in this way no longer receive the main emphasis.

In any case, the term "authority" ("validity") is one with many facets. It includes the following aspects: i) *authority in civil law*: a church is recognized by the state as an independent legal body on the basis of the Confessio Augustana (this applied in Germany from 1555 down to the end of the old Empire; Scandinavia would need to be mentioned today, while making all due allowances for the situation of the church in individual countries in respect of civil law); ii) *authority in ecclesial law*: a church defines its own understanding of its character by reference to the confession of faith which it recognizes as binding on itself and its office bearers (this varies in Europe, the USA, the Third World¹); iii) *dogmatic authority*: the confession as the theological standard for teaching and preaching; iv) *spiritual authority*: recognition of the truth of the substance of the Confessio Augustana leads to adherence to the confession.

These aspects are all interrelated, but are often treated independently. The following points are also important for the authority of the confession: Does it reflect the biblical message faithfully and adequately? Does it mark off the confessions from each other or can it claim ecumenical authority? Does it also do justice to contemporary doctrinal and ethical questions?

b) Statements about the authority (validity) of a confession of faith also depend on the hermeneutical question: How is the *Confessio Augustana* to be understood? In common with every traditional document, this Confession needs exegesis in order to become clear. By its very approach, the *Confessio Augustana* here proves itself an important model of Reformation theology. Appealing to the Scriptures and referring back to the creeds and christological dogma of the ancient church, it formulates theological insights in the light of christology and justification.

The *Confessio Augustana* contains no special article concerning the authority of Holy Scripture. It obviously proceeds on the assumption that the right understanding establishes its own validity (authority) as we actually make use of the Scriptures. The Reformers viewed the Scriptures as the place where the word of God is audible. They also interpreted them from the standpoint of the gospel of justification, as the key to Reformation hermeneutics. Further reflection is needed on the problem thereby posed of the hermeneutical circle, as well as on the problem of the relationship between Scripture and confession.

c) The different aspects of the concept of authority (validity) tell us nothing, either separately or together, of the extent to which the *Confessio Augustana* is actually taught and recognized in congregations today. To discover this we have to take into account not only direct familiarity with the text of the Augsburg Confession, but also its influence on preaching and doctrine, pastoral care, worship, and piety. The history of this influence goes back to the first acceptance of the *Confessio Augustana* by a group, such as a church, congregation, or even association of churches, as in accordance with the Scriptures and as authoritative for their members and office bearers.

In an exchange of experiences in the group, it was emphasized, on the one hand, that the *Confessio Augustana* is unfamiliar today in congregations and even among pastors. It continues to have authority largely as a historical document dealing with out-of-date questions. The only confessional document still of any importance in the congregations is the Small Catechism. The teaching of the Confession is usually regarded by most pastors as a purely formal matter. On the other hand, it is pointed out that the *Confessio Augustana* has frequently been

appealed to as a doctrinal standard in times of crisis in the church. An indirect encounter with the Confessio Augustana takes place in theological education by the medium of a theology with a distinctively Lutheran approach. The church constitutions, service books, and hymnbooks have been influenced by the Augsburg Confession, and this influence is still felt indirectly even today. The Catholic discussion of a possible "recognition" of the Confessio Augustana has stimulated a deeper interest in the Confession on the part of Protestant congregations and pastors.

2. Confession and Binding Doctrine

a) The working group was agreed that the primary basis of the authoritative character of doctrines is to be found in soteriology. The soteriological approach takes into account the boundless grace of God toward the human race as expressed in his saving word in Jesus Christ. The proclamation which carries this message of salvation is binding and authoritative. Because the binding character of doctrinal statements and confessional documents is also rooted in soteriology, confessions of faith can claim authority as fundamental guidance for the church. This truth corresponds with the truth that the church is the creation of God's word.

But since God's word seeks to reach and convince human beings, we can speak of tradition as binding authoritative doctrine only as God's utterance is related to the faith of the human being. The truth of faith is not to be divorced from its anchorage in God, but must be related at the same time to the existential context and situation of the human being.

b) On this basis, a differentiated view of authority is possible. As far as its origin is concerned, the soteriological and ecclesiological aspects are to be seen not as alternatives, but as a matter of making the necessary distinctions and assigning the proper priorities. When the situation is taken into account, as it must be, the authoritative character of a doctrine is determined not merely by the fact that it is in itself correct, but also by its purpose of encouraging the confession of the faith and of responding to the challenge of the time.

c) We must still ask whether such terms as "binding character" and "authority" do not too easily give rise to a misunderstanding of God's liberating word, imprisoning it in unsuitable categories and thus robbing it of its dynamic. Real answers must undoubtedly be given to the question as to what is valid and authoritative today in proclamation, doctrine, and confession. But if this is to be done properly, the interpretation must take into account the situation at any given time. We have to note here that concepts and thought patterns are always inextricably bound up with some particular intellectual, historical, or cultural system and make sense only within that system.

d) On the basis of this axiom, the *Confessio Augustana* can be described as a combination of systems. In other words, its own theological system - in the sense of modern linguistic analysis - combines tradition and reinterpretation. On the one hand, the intention of the *Confessio Augustana* was to remain in the continuum of the ancient Catholic faith as expressed in the ecumenical creeds and the classic christology (cf. CA I to III) and it made these the basis of its authority (validity). On the other hand, the Confession says that justification through faith (CA IV) is the "chief teaching in the church" (CA XX) and proves this from the Scriptures. This combination of continuity and change defines the structure of Reformation theology.

e) What is the consequence of these attempts to interpret authority for the binding validity of a confession of faith such as the *Confessio Augustana*? The aim of this Confession is to formulate God's unchangeable and supreme word. At the same time it is a human attempt and therefore relative. The very diversity of human situations makes it questionable whether it is possible to have common confessional statements which can claim equal validity everywhere in the world. The significance of the *Confessio Augustana* is not thereby destroyed. As a confession of faith shared by many churches, its special role has always been to help churches and Christians to know and recognize each other as such. This does not exclude the confession of faith in a new way in changed circumstances or in special situations. Yet this will not be accompanied by any depreciation of the *Confessio Augustana*, but rather by critical reflection on it.

When we speak of the authority and binding character of the *Confessio Augustana*,

therefore, we must make certain distinctions:

The *Confessio Augustana* is *historically authoritative*: It became the foundation document of the Lutheran churches and inaugurated a tradition which, even today, continues to mold these churches in spite of all changes.

It is *authoritative as an example*: When the gospel and the church were threatened, it was a call to confess Christ and an effort to renew the church by the authority of the word of God, yet without sacrificing its unity.

It is *authoritative in substance*: It rediscovered justification, as the fruit of Christ's death and resurrection, as the fundamental basis for doctrine and confession.

Authoritative in this sense, the *Confessio Augustana* helps us to concentrate on the center of Scripture. It remains innocent of claims to completeness which cannot be fulfilled and is open to contemporary expressions required by new situations.

3. Self-Examination and Reflection in the Ecumenical Context

a) Throughout its 450-year history, the *Confessio Augustana* has been interpreted again and again in different ways. Nor will our interpretation of it be the only correct one. To recognize this saves us from vanity and from any temptation to turn the confession into a fetish. It also prevents us from dismissing the Confession as meaningless. The fact is that the *Confessio Augustana* invites us to examine ourselves. And this includes the question whether we are still standing today wholly on the basis of this Confession or even continue to cleave to its affirmations.

We realize afresh that the *Confessio Augustana* is the document of what was originally an act of confession, peremptorily required for the sake of the gospel and the church, in obedience to consciences stabbed awake by the word of God. The question we are asked is how we are to meet the challenges of our time. We are not necessarily required to produce a new confession comparable with that

offered by the Confessio Augustana. What is certainly required of us, however, is the sort of courage and authentic outspokenness shown by the Reformers. It is also required of us that we apply the Reformation key of justification through faith to the changed situation of today (as compared with the 16th century) as well as to other cultures (cf. 2.d, above).

We are not to forget that the Confessio Augustana is a historical document. We cannot automatically equate the errors of our own day with the old heresies of a distant past, at least not if we are to be able to oppose them with like success.

b) The Confessio Augustana was intended to be a statement of the Catholic faith, and it became, contrary to its purpose, the doctrinal basis of a confession. This raises the question whether our readiness for the venture of unity does not need to become much plainer today. One proof of this readiness could be our evident pain at the division of the churches, and especially at the absence of altar fellowship which this division entails.

An unmistakable proof of our ecumenical openness would be our intensified efforts to cooperate with other churches for a credible unity in witness and service. The Confessio Augustana provides us with good grounds for such efforts, since it was primarily intended as a document of unity, and not a document of division.

NOTE

1. Cf. Helmut Zeddies, "The Confession of the Church", *The Lutheran Church - Past and Present*, ed. Vilmos Vajta (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977), pp. 101-120.

THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA AND THE PROBLEMS OF TODAY

Leader of the Group: Inge Lønning; Recorder: Martin Seils

1. Method and Interpretation

The theme of this group can be tackled in two ways: specific current problems can be selected and corresponding solutions provided from the Confessio Augustana; or else we can regard the Confessio Augustana itself as a challenging document whose statements are relevant to current problems, doing this, of course, with an awareness of contemporary issues.

It seems important to examine the challenge of the Confessio Augustana and to arrange an encounter between it and the problems of today.

We must take into account the historical remoteness of the Confessio Augustana from the present. Its text cannot be related directly to our own times. It employs the language of the 16th century, shares the mental assumptions of that century, and has in part been shaped by the historical conditions prevailing at that time. What needs to be done, therefore, is to bring out those basic aims and perspectives of the Confessio Augustana which are most permanent in character. In some cases it is also necessary to "extrapolate" basic statements of the Confession, i.e., to prolong them so that they reach the present time. The procedure in a hermeneutic of this kind, with its concentration and extrapolation, must be that of historical criticism, enabling us to differentiate between the permanent elements and the historically time-bound elements. At the same time, it must respect the obligatory appeal to the Scriptures inherent in the Confession and also the truth-value which the statements of a confession possess as the doctrinal utterances of the church of our forebears.

The dominant perspective of the Confessio Augustana focusses on human beings in their relation to God and to their fellow humans. It testifies that these human relationships have been disrupted by lack of trust and by self-centeredness (CA II, XVIII, and XIX). Above all, it also testifies that God gives us a new life in which we turn wholly and freely to him and to our fellow human beings, but

does this *only* by grace, *only* in Christ, and *only* through faith (CA IV, VI, XVI, and XX).

Out of the many matters calling for treatment, we focus on the following: the question of the meaning of human life (2); the question of God (3); political and social obligations (4); and the divisions of Christendom (5).

2. The Confessio Augustana and the Question of the Meaning of Human Life

The Confessio Augustana defines man (the human being) as a sinner who, without faith in God, stands under the threat of eternal wrath (CA II); as a creature who, despite sin and judgment, is maintained by God with a view to salvation (CA I and III); as one justified by pure grace and through faith and who, in the act of justification, receives a new identity (CA IV); as one who has been set free for fresh obedience, and who becomes the subject of living action, the person and the work being kept distinct (CA VI and XX); and as a member of the church which in CA VII is called "the assembly of all believers" (cf. also CA VIII).

The view of human life which is widespread today holds that we are on our way to self-realization; that we ourselves are to assume responsibility for what we are and do; that we experience evil as self-alienation and the destruction of the community; that we seek to deliver ourselves from this evil; and that we mostly find self-fulfilment in achievement and in our own or other people's recognition of this achievement. Moreover, it must be noted that contemporary human experience of history is quite ambivalent: as well as impressive achievements and advances, there is also a sense of failure and the fact that millions of people suffer.

The Confessio Augustana's definition of human life can help us to see what is false and what is true in our contemporary view of ourselves. We only really become "ourselves" through the creative message of justification. The program of the "self-realization" of the individual and of society imposes an impossible burden on the self in both cases. Only the grace and judgment of God's word unmasks evil as the derangement of the original relationship between God and human beings. The program of self-deliverance from alienation is a mirage.

Anyone who is justified through faith in the sight of God is a "new creation" (2Cor. 5:17) and accordingly relieved of the burden of having to fulfil him or her "self". The threat of eternal wrath (judgment of the person) is removed for the sake of Christ in the daily renewed declaration of absolution. But the person whose "self" is fulfilled in this way in the message of justification is also liberated as the subject of an activity in which he or she can exercise or fail to exercise responsibility (judgment of the works: 2Cor. 5:10). This activity is the new obedience, based on responsibility to God (CA V). It responds to the categorical imperative to *continue* in faith and to continue to *perform* the works of love intelligently; leaving behind all self-justification and all depersonalization of the neighbor (CA XX and XVI). This activity is a provisional performance bounded by the universal horizon of the coming judgment and kingdom toward which the world is moving (CA XVI and XVII).

The article of justification through faith is the basis for behavior which displays unconditional respect for the incalculable personality of every human being, which is always a gift to be received, and therefore champions unconditionally the recognition of human rights in practice on the basis of this *sine qua non* of faith.

3. The *Confessio Augustana* and the Question of God

All of us today share with others a self-portrait in which we regard our social dimensions as also those we look to exclusively for the confirmation and fulfillment of ourselves as persons. Nothing is of value if it is not acknowledged and given recognition from this quarter. Nothing has meaning if it has no place in the social network of activity. This view may be described as "practical atheism" because the question of God is no longer raised as a question in its own right, even though the relativity of values and meanings is at the same time sensed as a threat.

We must certainly acknowledge that for contemporary human beings who have become conscious of their social dimensions and responsibilities these areas are bound to be more prominent in their central longings for meaning and significance than they were for their 16th century predecessors. The connection between person and

work comes more to the forefront, also in the matter of the relationship with God, than was the case in the *Confessio Augustana*. In our experience of God, therefore, we experience him as a God who determines and liberates the human person together with its social ramifications.

But the permanent witness of the *Confessio Augustana* is that human life can be truly defined only if we continue to respect the distinction between the dimension of God and that of society. Only as we allow the dimension of God a distinctive constitutive significance of its own can we as human beings hope for ultimate forms of fulfilment and liberation. We can be justified in an ultimate sense as human beings only if we are willing to receive this justification in our relationship with God, from God, in Christ, through faith. It is the conviction of the *Confessio Augustana* that, when we are justified in the relationship with God, we are set free for the works of faith and equipped for action in the secular structures of society in an incomparable way.

The *Confessio Augustana* also makes it quite plain that the relationship with God which becomes a reality for us in faith is not just a vague relationship to the transcendent. Such a relationship to and experience of transcendence could also be defined as just one dimension (even if an essential dimension) in the sum-total of immanent structures. There is nothing to prevent it from being explained away as merely the projection of immanent conditions and characteristics. But the *Confessio Augustana* defines God as the Triune God who enters into relationship with the world and who gives himself to the world and to human beings as the Creator, Reconciler, and faith-creating Spirit, so that we may live as human beings in a believing relationship with him.

4. The Confessio Augustana and Political and Social Responsibilities

Basic affirmations are made in the *Confessio Augustana* about the responsibilities of Christians in government and society, and concrete examples are given to illustrate these affirmations: In the light of Romans 13, civil government is affirmed in principle as a good order rooted in the divine will. Christians can act freely, responsibly, and realistically within the framework of this order with a good conscience.

The examples given to illustrate these principles can only be fully understood, of course, in the context of the 16th century situation. They concern, above all: the administration of justice and punishment; the taking of oaths before authorities and courts; and the responsible conduct of war (*iure bellare*). A striking feature is the absence of any reference to social questions.

Christians today, on the other hand, have become conscious of their social responsibilities. Our consciences are troubled by the difference between social systems: whereas conditions have been created in one part of the world for a decent human life, other people are still struggling for basic social rights. The struggle for the implementation of human rights is for us an elementary duty in a world where basic needs for food, medical care, old-age welfare, security of employment, and education are still unfulfilled. The human family is suffering because of the worldwide escalation in armaments. It is now open to question whether we can still talk of a "just war". Christians in many countries support limited arms programs or are engaged in wars of liberation; other Christians are committed to a pacifist program.

We can expect no direct help from the *Confessio Augustana* in reaching decisions in new tasks of this kind. But the Confession must not be misused in order to discredit the struggle for social justice as highhanded usurpation on the part of modern human beings.

On the other hand, the *Confessio Augustana*'s vision of the human situation before God contributes to the discussion certain elements which are most important for social ethics:

a) Since it is on the basis of grace alone, irrespective of our achievements, that we are justified in the sight of God, we acquire a certain inalienable quality as human beings. It is not just as we are able to make ourselves useful to society by our thoughts and deeds that we have rights; our inalienable human dignity derives from God's grace and initiative, and it is this which does us justice, i.e., secures us recognition and worth. Here is the root of human dignity, from which human rights derive. It is not society which defines the worth of the human being; rather society must protect the rights of the human beings

entrusted to it, and this includes those human beings who, because of sickness or old age, have become socially "useless".

b) Since the definition of God acquires concreteness by the reference to Christ's self-offering because of our sins, the human community finds salvation as it shares in Christ's sacrifice. The Lord's Supper thus becomes the living core of the church as a community.

c) Because Christians have received the freedom to act responsibly in society and state in obedience to the divine commandments, any self-deification of human social organization is excluded. The programs of governments and parties are not sanctioned by religion, but must be tested for their utility and in some cases supported accordingly.

5. The Confessio Augustana and the Divisions of Christendom

The Confessio Augustana confesses one holy Christian church (CA VII) and regards itself as a confession of this one holy Christian church. The only form of the church known to this Confession is that of the individual local congregations assembled around the word and sacrament in worship. The Augsburg Confession affirms that unity forms part of the essence of the church because the church has been created and is maintained by the Spirit of God through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments (CA V). It is stressed in the Confessio Augustana that all that is necessary for the unity of the church is agreement in the proclamation of the gospel in word and sacrament, and it therefore explicitly states that in no circumstances is uniformity part of the essential unity of the church.

Influenced by the actual conditions of Christendom today, we are accustomed: to speak of churches, in the plural, and to mean by this different confessional corporations marked off from one another, as if this were something normal and self-evident; to speak of the unity of the churches as an ideal still to be achieved; to distinguish, therefore, between the church's unity and essence in such a way that unity becomes something extra which must in some way or other be added to the basic confessional corporations which are the essence of the church; to seek

this extra unity, which has still to be achieved, in uniformity; and to consider the achievement of church unity, therefore, to mean advances toward uniformity of church orders and theological statements.

Questions put to us today by the Confessio Augustana:

Do we understand the church in terms of that encounter between the gospel and the world which takes place in the *ministerium ecclesiasticum*?

Do we derive the church's unity, holiness, and Christian character clearly and exclusively from the justificatory action of God toward his world through the crucified and risen Jesus Christ?

Are we able to accept our own congregation, assembled together around preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, as this one holy Christian church?

Is it not permissible for us to view the missionary outreach of the church precisely in the light of this basic view of unity, and thus to take account of the *satis est* (CA VII)?

Can we be content with Lutheran churches, a Lutheran World Federation, and a Lutheran identity, at all, except as provisional realities which are useful only as they point beyond themselves to the unity of the church which becomes a reality only in God's justificatory action toward the godless?

THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA AND THE SO-CALLED "THIRD WORLD"

Leader of the Group: Yoshiro Ishida; Recorder: Robert T. Hoeferkamp

Summary of the First Session

If Lutheran churches in North America and Europe find it difficult to perceive the relevance of the Confessio Augustana for their own life and work, how much more must this be the case for Third World churches - unless, of course, there is a central perspective or concern in the Confessio Augustana that has abiding relevance for all churches and, indeed, for all humankind?

Adoption of the Confessio Augustana in Third World churches was often purely fortuitous, imposed by western missionaries. The real solution would be for these churches to begin by struggling with the meaning of the Bible in their own situation and only then approach the Confessio Augustana. In most cases they would probably produce a statement similar in order and content to the Augsburg Confession, but it would at least be the result of authentic wrestling.

The opinion was expressed that in Latin America the role of Lutheranism ought to be to attempt to confront Roman Catholics with the central teaching of the Confessio Augustana rather than make converts for its own ecclesiastical structures.

The group received a description of the South African church situation - both black and white - which concluded with the observation that no women are ordained to the ministry of the Lutheran churches in that country. The same is true of the Lutheran churches in India. It was noted that sociological factors are always - or usually - at work in determining the case for or against women's ordination.

In this connection, it was stated that the Confessio Augustana does not say anything about the ordination of women; and the question was raised whether it says anything about themes or topics that are real issues in Third World countries. In reply it was said that if one thinks of the Confessio Augustana as a document containing "church law" or "doctrines", then it is true that nothing is said

about women's ordination or, in fact, about hardly any other subject that is alive in the Third World. But if the central thrust of the *Confessio Augustana* is not to throw people back upon themselves, but upon Christ, then it does have something to say regarding the ordination of women and other topics. In this case, the *Confessio Augustana* is anti-legalistic and rejects any legalistic decision opposing women's ordination. It was added, however, that the Confession is generally accepted or received as a legal or legalistic document.

A lengthy discourse showed how, in South Africa, the gospel (Christianity) and western life and culture are thought to form one whole, with the result that the Lutheran confession (the *Confessio Augustana*) is simply considered a part of western culture. To this, it was replied that it is precisely the concern of the Augsburg Confession and Paul - justification by grace and by faith - to reject any manifestation of human culture as a necessary precondition for accepting Christ. St. Paul speaks of "a new creation" (2Cor. 5:17).

Summary of the Second Session

There are obviously cultural, religious, social, and political gaps between the situation of Lutheran churches in the Third World and the status of Lutheran churches in Europe and North America. Can the *Confessio Augustana* be meaningful in such different contemporary contexts? On the other hand, are not these gaps and chasms narrower than the gap that separates all who live in this 20th century, which is dominated by science and technology, from the world of the 16th century? Is it not more difficult to affirm the fundamental meaning of the *Confessio Augustana* for all our 20th century churches than to bridge the gap between the Lutheran churches of the "Third World" and those of the "First World".

A basic objection to the *Confessio Augustana*, or at least a hindrance to its acceptance on the part of Third World churches, consists in the political background and power pressures against which it was formulated and presented. On the other hand, it was pointed out that all people operate politically when they work together, and yet the political nature of their working does not necessarily affect the truth they affirm and maintain.

The group was reminded that the Confessio Augustana is a "given", which can mean either a gift or an imposition. Our task is to speak about the appropriation of this Confession: The *Gabe* must become an *Aufgabe*. But *why* the Confessio Augustana? Is this merely an arbitrary "given"? No, the Augsburg Confession is given for the sake of and because of the gospel. The Scriptures can be read in many ways and have many theologies. To accept the Confessio Augustana is to witness to the gospel in the Scriptures. In other words, this Confession is important because justification is important.

In view of this inner, material importance and authority of the Confessio Augustana, it was laid down as a kind of law that the strength of Lutheranism is *doctrine*. But doctrine is also its weakness. Another Lutheran weakness, it was stated, is in the area of worship. According to Lutheran understanding, as formulated in the Confessio Augustana, ceremonies and traditions are free, but this does not mean they are unimportant. This consideration caused the following question to be raised: Does Lutheranism have what it takes to become a "church" in the sense of an organized body with canon law, polity, liturgy, etc.? Did not Lutheranism arise as a movement within the church catholic of western Europe? Therefore, should Lutherans go around the world founding "churches"? It was countered that in the 16th century the Lutheran movement was not accepted by the western catholic church, and so a separate church had to be founded. To this came the reply: Yes, and that's the tragedy: the "movement" was frozen into a "church".

The discussion now centered on the question of worship, and a graphic description was given of the freedom and joy of African worship. It was stated that in India the Lutherans first attend Lutheran worship services and then other churches, not only for enrichment in worship, but also for the sake of the sermon. In addition, Lutherans are now using new Indian songs and not just the old translated hymns. In Indonesia, on the other hand, the churches were forbidden to use all indigenous music and instruments since they were inseparably associated with heathenism. They now continue to use traditional western instruments, and any attempt to replace them would be vigorously resisted. Germany needs to learn new forms of worship from Africa. In Sweden, a cathedral can be filled twice a year through the introduction of a joyful service of worship. Lutheran missionaries went out

from Germany and the USA when the liturgy was at the lowest point in these countries, and the result was that they exported plain preaching. The various movements toward a more joyful, indigenous liturgy in the Third World countries (as well as in the sending countries) should be understood against this background of a severely intellectual sermonic-type worship. One participant stressed that the 16th century Reformation spread precisely through the use of popular hymns: The Reformation was "sung" into people's hearts. Hymns and liturgy, therefore, are not simply adiabara, and one simply does not sing "any old thing". The content is important.

Summary of the Third Session

This session began with the topic of Lutheran introversion and extroversion. After the Second World War, Japanese Lutherans separated from the Kyodan (united church) in which they had previously participated to found their own church body. Now they are introverted and concerned about their own identity. Their example, it was said, illustrates a permanent dilemma for Lutheranism. Since the movement of the 16th century did not succeed in reforming the whole church, it was obliged to form a separate denomination. Now it is forced to concentrate on its own identity, even though it tries to be a movement for the whole church of Christ. There is no general solution to this dilemma. It can be solved only on a case to case basis.

The next question raised was that of love in action. To share resources is the way to share love. How does "sharing love" relate to the Confessio Augustana? Sharing resources is a matter of motivation; the Augsburg Confession shows how to do good works (cf. CA XX). It was pointed out that motivating people to love and to do good works is not accomplished by abstract statements. Sermons are usually moralistic and legalistic, telling people that they ought to love. But sermons should be in the indicative mood. People are always being exhorted to love, but what they need is to be given the power to love.

The concrete reality of oppression in South Africa led to the question of liberation. South African black churches are still heavily dependent on foreign mission boards and thus feel tied to the Confessio Augustana. If these churches

oppose the Confessio Augustana, where do they end up? It was replied that South Africans react against the source of the Confession, i.e., the missionaries who brought it. In other words, they react against the Christian gospel because they react against the white person who brought the gospel. When Africans return to their roots, said another participant, they always encounter the phenomenon of African traditional religions, which can form no basis for a "Confessio Africana". In fact, the source of the Augsburg Confession is not white missionaries and white mission boards, but the gospel and the Bible. So why not use the Confessio Augustana against the South African white churches that oppress the South African black churches? There are resources in Luther and the Confessio Augustana for a sort of liberation theology. Why do we not make use of them?

At this point the discussion turned to the church, the community of believers. This cannot be an "invisible church". But white Lutherans in South Africa say to the black Lutherans: As long as we both have the same confession of faith (the Confessio Augustana), we are "united spiritually". At the same time, there are white African Christians who are deeply convinced that the separation of the races has firm biblical sanction and support. White Christians, if they are Lutherans, should be told: You do not read the Bible according to the Confessio Augustana, as gospel and promise; you read it as a book of (supposed) laws, rules, and paradigms which are to guide and undergird human life. A somewhat similar situation exists in Sweden, where some people will not worship in a church which has a woman pastor.

The session ended with a lengthy discussion on women in the ordained ministry in Third World churches. Although in India there is felt to be a need for women in the ministry, there is some resistance on the part of church leaders to the ordination of women. In Indonesia there is concern that the issue of women's ordination not be the cause of a split between churches. It might be well to strengthen the work of Bible women and deaconesses who take part in preaching the gospel - but not in administering the sacraments - to people in general and to women in particular. Sharp exception was taken to the splitting of the ministry of gospel proclamation from the ministry of the sacraments. This means that if, in certain cultural contexts, women are needed to minister to women, and

men to men, both sexes should be ordained. But, again, fear was expressed that this might cause a split between churches. In India, as one participant explained, the ordination of women is being sought through a peaceful, orderly, and gradual process. In conclusion, the wish was expressed that somewhere in the world the churches would solve the problem of women's ordination on its own intrinsic merits, without yielding to the outside pressures of a secular society.

Conclusion

Two members of the group presented the following summary statements:

1. One can perhaps say that there are two main functions of the *Confessio Augustana* in the lives of all "Lutheran" churches, both of which derive from the early history of Lutheranism. Sorting these two out is important for all Lutherans, but especially for those from the Third World. The *Confessio Augustana* was presented to the western catholic church by a theologically reforming movement within that church as a specific reform proposal to the whole church: that all churchly proclamation and practice be examined by the norm that true righteousness is in Christ rather than in the believer. This, then, is the Confession's dogmatic function. Only after the movement failed to reach the whole church did the *Confessio Augustana* acquire the additional function of being the identity token of a group of separated churches, historically descended from the Reformation movement and more or less committed to maintaining it.

Beginning with the second function, it is thus simply a historical "given" in the lives of "Lutheran" churches that we belong to this group of churches and so somehow must reckon with the *Confessio Augustana*. In the history of many Third World churches, the accidental and often dubious nature of the historical processes by which the Confession came to them is obvious and sometimes offputting. For such churches, affirmation of the *Confessio Augustana* is often a formal gesture to declare commonality with other "Lutheran" churches. The Augsburg Confession functions, with regard to its content, as an extensively unknown token of family affiliation.

Such a use and function of the *Confessio Augustana* is not in itself wrong. Why

should we not symbolize a fellowship we feel in this way? Since our churches have the Confessio Augustana in their heritage, we would be foolish not to make whatever theological and spiritual use of this great document is suggested by our various situations, as, for example, in the struggle with the Islamic concept of God or with South African apartheid.

However, if we not only accept the Confessio Augustana as a "given", but ask why we *should* so accept it - a question posed with special urgency by the churches of the Third World - we have to turn to the first (i.e., dogmatic) function. The Confessio Augustana's one great concern is that "justification" is "by faith", i.e., that the church must be constantly purified of teaching and practice that direct the faithful back upon themselves and their works rather than to Christ. If indeed the drive to be right in ourselves is a constant of the human condition, we may expect that the church in each culture will show its own form of "works-righteousness" - which in Third World contexts may differ from European "works-righteousness" - so that the Confessio Augustana will in fact have its dogmatic function in all cultures.

Dogmatic affirmation of the Confessio Augustana by Third World churches thus consists in the analysis of indigenous forms of "works-righteousness" and the determination to direct the gospel against them. For example: The doctrine of justification without works rejects all practices that suggest that cultural conversion must be a middle step between previous religion and Christian faith. Or: The doctrine of justification allows no use of the Old Testament as a paradigm of everyone's history (so as to justify an Afrikaan "Israel's expropriation of a black Canaan", or a "liberationist" use of the same pattern).

These latter considerations must reflect the use of the Confessio Augustana as an "identity symbol". Should not "Lutheran" identity be extroverted (aimed at bringing specific insights to the whole church) rather than introverted (aimed at preserving itself)? This question arises with special urgency for, e.g., the Lutheran bodies in India over against the Church of South India, or the Lutherans of Japan over against the Kyodan. We may, in principle, affirm the first alternative and yet acknowledge that, in the intrinsically anomalous situation of a "Lutheran" denomination, the question must be raised anew in each church.

2. While for many Lutheran churches of the Third World the *Confessio Augustana*, through its inclusion in the churches' constitutions, has a binding character as a confessional document, different attitudes and developments can be found:

a) For many churches acceptance of the *Confessio Augustana* is a token of affiliation within the worldwide communion of Lutheran churches, and especially within the LWF. The Holy Scripture and the ecumenical creeds are thought to be sufficient. There is a tendency to use relevant biblical texts to provide answers to contemporary problems faced by the churches, whereas no need is seen for deeper theological reflection such as is formulated in the *Confessio Augustana*.

Furthermore, religious, cultural, and political situations in Third World countries are seen to be different from those encountered by the *Confessio Augustana* in 1530. Along with a strong nationalism in the Third World and sharp opposition to foreign domination, there is a tendency within the younger churches not to put too much stress on connections or doctrinal statements from abroad. Moreover, there is a hesitancy on the part of Lutheran churches to stress their specific Lutheran confession in case they isolate themselves from Protestant sister churches in their own country.

b) On the other hand, the encounter with resurgent traditional native religions, established religions like Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, problems of a merger, and the ecumenical movement, have pointed to the need for a clearer confessional identity of the churches. This results in the writing of doctrinal statements in which the *Confessio Augustana* has been rewritten or restated in doctrinal formulation, with or without specific reference to this Confession.

c) The Confession of Faith of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant and the acceptance of this church as a member of the LWF has raised the question what is meant by "essential agreement" with the *Confessio Augustana*. A clearer criterion of what "essential agreement" means is needed. In this regard, basic agreements on christology, soteriology, and the function and nature of the church (ecclesiology) are the most important issues.

ROMAN CATHOLIC "RECOGNITION" OF THE CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA: A QUESTION FOR THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES

Leader of the Group: Harding Meyer; Recorder: Manfred Köhnlein

Discussion of the possible "recognition" of the Confessio Augustana by the Roman Catholic Church has proved both explosive and challenging. In the following report we try to reflect the main viewpoints and developments in this discussion and not always the agreed view of all those who participated in it.

1. *"Recognition": Objectives and Difficulties*

At its Dar es Salaam Assembly (1977), the LWF expressly welcomed "endeavors which aim at a Catholic recognition of the Confessio Augustana" and voted by a large majority to promote efforts in this direction, both in principle and in practice¹. By this action, the Assembly identified itself with and focussed public attention on the concerns of many theologians and church leaders of both confessions who have been engaged in ecumenical dialog for several years.

The debate on recognition is symptomatic of the altered situation in both Catholicism and Lutheranism. Scientifically, the debate stems from the convergence in exegetical studies in the two confessions, agreement between church historians and systematic theologians, and interconfessional doctrinal conversations. Liturgically, it is the fruit of the liturgical renewal in the two churches, and pastorally, of the efforts of ecumenical study groups and local ecumenical meetings. But it has also been stimulated by the growing secular context which at this time sets both churches comparable and identical tasks. To some extent the debate on recognition is the Roman Catholic Church's admission that the Protestant churches are to be assigned an official ecclesial status and continuity. But it also embodies Protestant hopes that Roman Catholic theology and the Roman Catholic Church are really ready to engage seriously in the movement toward unity. Not least, it is due to the pioneering efforts of local congregations to achieve intercommunion and a common pastoral and diaconal service at the local level, where it is a matter of urgency that these contacts be given legal status and that problems of conscience be eased by mutual official recognition between the

churches. The congregations do not, of course, directly connect the convergence of the confessions with the question of the "recognition" of the *Confessio Augustana*, and to this extent the numbers actually engaged in the debate are few. Nevertheless, the leading persons speak with a sense of responsibility for both theology and church.

The debate on "recognition" rests, therefore, on a complex of different motives. It can be considered as an act of ecumenical love and even of penitence, as an admission of historical change, as the result of many years of ecumenical dialog, as a contemporary necessity, and as a ratification of *de facto* ecumenical fellowship. At present, of course, a certain *ritardando* can be discerned in the debate on recognition. An initial enthusiasm has abated. "Recognition" is now less linked with the specific date of a jubilee and regarded more as a sign of permanent interconfessional convergence.

As the debate on recognition widens - in respect both of the importance of the material issues and of the number of churches and people involved - and both sides see more clearly the overall ecclesial consequences of recognition, the still outstanding objectives appear more difficult and the very notion of "recognition" becomes more questionable. The conditions and consequences of recognition loom larger.

Our approach to the problems of recognition, therefore, not only demands theological thoroughness, but is also inseparably connected with the actual *experience* of the churches at a given place and time. Partnership between the churches naturally and properly looks and feels different to Lutheran churches in different situations: Some confront the Roman Catholic Church with superior numbers in their geographical and cultural contexts and even to some extent as established national churches; others are minorities in a diaspora situation where Catholicism is sometimes experienced in painful forms; and yet others confront Roman Catholic churches in conditions of numerical and theological parity. It would seem that conditions of equality between the two confessions are particularly favorable to the idea of "recognition". From some of the Scandinavian churches, for example, the objection is heard that the debate on recognition should perhaps be regarded as a form of German "provincialism" since it points

up a specifically regional, German, problem. The German situation cannot always be regarded as the characteristic situation of Lutheran theology and the Lutheran church.

Another question raised is whether the discussion with the Roman Catholic Church on recognition is not premature, particularly in view of the fact that the Lutheran/Reformed Leuenberg Agreement² has still not been fully recognized and implemented in the congregations. It is pointed out that the unity of the church is something already given by the call of God in Christ as attested in the Scriptures, and not something we can bring into being by our own endeavors. Might it not also be conceivable that instead of aiming at "recognition" of the *Confessio Augustana* on the global level, efforts first be made to achieve recognition on the regional level, i.e., in those places where the conditions are particularly propitious for such recognition?

Taken together, these objections suggest that further clarification is needed of the *concept* of recognition and the range of the *process* of recognition.

2. The Goals and Process of "Recognition"

It is difficult to pin down the concept and range of "recognition". For one thing, Catholic and Protestant expectations and possibilities in this respect differ considerably. For another, consensus has still to be achieved even among the Lutheran churches themselves. The differences between them are connected with different views of the link between juridical, theological, and spiritual processes. Can and must "recognition" be understood as a formal juridical act? Or would a symbolic action be sufficient? A symbolic act could still be limited to the regional level. It would endorse, for example, the legal independence of the Lutheran churches of Germany, to a certain extent also from outside. A regionally restricted recognition could, of course, represent a threat to the universal confessional fellowship of the Lutheran churches.

Original analogies with political recognition procedures seem increasingly to be discarded, and distinctively spiritual forms of recognition are being sought. The first suggestion here is a "partial consensus" or a "basic consensus" seeking a

common "catholic" understanding (in the original non-confessional sense of "catholic") within the process of growing convergence. From the Roman Catholic side, too, the *Confessio Augustana* should be regarded as a legitimate form of the apostolic faith, implicitly admitting that there can be a variety of binding forms of the Christian faith.

The ultimate overarching goal is certainly ecclesial fellowship between the Protestant and Catholic churches while preserving Protestant identity. The intention is certainly not to turn the Lutheran Confession into an essentially Roman Catholic confession whose status and interpretation would be subject to the infallible Roman Catholic teaching office as the final court of appeal. It is hoped, however, that the "concern for catholicity" inherent in the *Confessio Augustana* and this Confession's "harmony with the doctrine of the ancient church and its basic ecclesial form" (Ratzinger) will be stressed. A matter calling for further study is how far the *Confessio Augustana* can be separated from the total body of Lutheran confessional documents and how far it can only be viewed as part of the subsequent Lutheran tradition. A Roman Catholic "recognition" of the *Confessio Augustana* could be an important starting point for a further discussion between Catholics and Lutherans on difficult problems which are still unresolved. The Roman Catholic Church would need to be assured that the *Confessio Augustana* is not interpreted on the Lutheran side in a neo-Protestant sense or along the lines of theological liberalism.

It seems to be absolutely essential to insist that the *Confessio Augustana* would not become a doctrinal basis for the Roman Catholic Church any more than it would cease to be a binding standard for Evangelical Lutheran churches, and that the possibility of a self-dissolution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church is a non-starter. All that is expected in the first instance is an endorsement of Lutheran identity by the Roman Catholic Church and an endorsement of Roman Catholic identity by the Lutheran churches, without any glossing over of theological and religious differences. In order to avoid all misunderstanding, it would seem necessary to abandon the term "recognition" in view of the many implications of this term which call for exploration, and to speak rather of "assent to" or "positive evaluation of", so as to keep the encounter process really open and free it of the burden of a legalistic "all or nothing".

3. The Conditions and Consequences of "Recognition"

The Confessio Augustana is to be understood as a fundamental confession, an authoritative *regula fidei* for Lutheran faith and life; it is therefore related in a fundamental way to structures of ministry, the church, patterns of life, etc. These structural contexts need to be taken into account in any Catholic "recognition" of the Confession. Consideration needs to be given to the question as to whether and to what extent we must distinguish between matters of *faith*, in which substantial agreement must be reached, and matters of *order*, in which some free room remains.

If the Roman Catholic Church grants that Lutheranism, on the basis of its adherence to the Confessio Augustana, is an independent and legitimate apostolic fellowship of churches, this admission will presumably come into conflict with the Roman Catholic claim to represent and be the true Catholic Church, the sole guarantor of the *successio apostolica* by its ministries. The question would also need to be examined as to how far, on the Catholic side, the doctrine of justification and its key position in the Confessio Augustana are recognized and whether the Roman Catholic Church is able to accept the full practical consequences of the importance of the event of justification in the life of the church.

The discussion will undoubtedly entail reflection on the nature of authority in general. Basic documents such as the Confessio Augustana have a different role in a confessional fellowship of the kind constituted by the Lutheran churches than they have in the markedly hierarchical structure of fellowship in the Roman Catholic Church, where confessions of faith are embedded in a quite different way in the structures of the teaching office, worship, and life. But on the Lutheran side, too, there is a palpable tension between the formal authority of the Confessio Augustana and the actual use made of it: Between a Lutheran "confessional scholasticism" at one extreme (stressing the finality and uniqueness of the confession of faith) and a confessional indifference at the other extreme (regarding the Confessio Augustana in the main as no more than a historical document) there is a wide range of diversity in the use of this Confession in the life of the Lutheran churches. There is evidence of contemporary use of the Confessio Augustana in which the latter is always given a full place in theological

training, in the pastor's ministry of teaching, in the catechetical practice of the congregation, and in theological controversy, but also of an "anonymous" influence of the Confessio Augustana, which has created a spiritual atmosphere which Lutheran Christians breathe in church courts and in the congregations without actually realizing that it derives from the Augsburg Confession.

It is to be hoped that a favorable public statement on the Confessio Augustana on the part of the Roman Catholic Church, based on a practical agreement on all basic matters, may lead the congregations to a more conscious and complete understanding of the Evangelical Lutheran view of the faith.

NOTES

1. Cf. *In Christ - A New Community: The Proceedings of the Sixth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, June 13-25, 1977*, ed. Arne Sovik (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1977), p. 175.
2. For the text of the Leuenberg Agreement, see *Lutheran World*, Vol. XX, No. 4, 1973, pp. 347-353.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

BY KRISTEN EJNER SKYDSGAARD

I have been asked to say a few words before we leave this beautiful place after these hard-working and substantial days. First, I will mention a very central and far-reaching word: "complementarity". This is indeed an ecumenical word. We all know the word "dialog", a great and deep word, but the word "complementarity" does have a special meaning.

As you know, complementarity is a key word in the sector of nuclear physics, apparently without any theological implication. But by a sort of extrapolation this theory of complementarity is of great value and significance also in spiritual contexts, and especially in ecumenical matters. We need each other; we represent complementary values that seem to be separated, divided, and opposed and yet complete each other. They are *two* things, but ultimately they are one thing.

Some of you know the name of Romano Guardini, the German philosopher of Italian origin, who wrote a book entitled *Der Gegensatz*¹ (The Contrast). In this he speaks of polarities which do not exclude but complete each other. We have spoken of the Augsburg Confession. In its depth this document is of complementary character.

It must be said that in the last analysis Catholicism represents a depth, just as Lutheranism represents a depth. The two profundities are different, but *in the end* they represent two complementary truths. Let me put this in another way: What is complementarity? The contrast of a true sentence is a false sentence, yes; but the contrast of a *great truth* can be *another* great and deep truth. Indeed, life is wonderful. What seems to be contradictory may, in the last instance, be *one* thing, a *unity* - not a dull stationary unity, but a living, provocative unity. Do not forget this phrase: *Simul iustus et peccator*. There we have it. The word "complementarity", taken from the sphere of nuclear physics, has a deep

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theological meaning, especially in ecumenical theology.

The second point of this meditation deals with correspondence between Luther and Melancthon at the time of the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. Melancthon wrote to Luther expressing his private worry and anxiety concerning the course and issue of the Diet. He saw no hope and was in great despair. Luther replied, in a letter dated June 29, 1530:

"The end and the outcome of this cause torture you because you cannot comprehend them. But if you would comprehend them, then I would not wish to be a partner in this cause, much less its originator. God has placed this cause into a certain paragraph [of teaching = *in locum quendam communem*], which you don't have in your rhetoric, nor in your philosophy. This (paragraph) is entitled "Faith"; in this paragraph are contained all the things that cannot be seen and do not appear [cf. Heb. 11:1,3]. Should someone attempt to make these things visible, touchable, and comprehensible, as you do, he will bring back, as the reward of his labor, worries and tears such as those you are bringing back to all of us who are vainly protesting. The Lord has promised that he would live in a cloud [cf. 1Kings 8:12], and he has made the darkness his hiding place [cf. Ps. 18:12]. If someone wants to, let him try to change it. Had Moses attempted to comprehend the outcome by which he might escape the pharaoh's army, then Israel would perhaps to this day be in Egypt. May the Lord increase faith for you and for all of us."²

Let this be our word of leave, our farewell: The Lord has promised to dwell in the dark. This is the gospel, the great joy, the overwhelming, great completeness.

NOTES

1. Romano Guardini, *Der Gegensatz: Versuche zu einer Philosophie des Lebendig-Konkreten* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, 1955).
2. *Luther's Works*, Vol. 49 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 331.

SELF-EXAMINATION: THE NECESSARY REFLECTION

The theme of our consultation also included the word "Self-Examination". And this was meant to be a specific challenge to the churches which confess their common Christian faith in the Augsburg Confession. The jubilee celebration calls for such a challenge. The different meetings, including the consultation documented here, were helpful for the self-examination of the churches and stimulated the reflection necessary for the potential generation of a renewal of faith and life in the service of the Lord. The jubilee year is only the beginning of this process. It sets us tasks which will keep us busy for a long time to come. These tasks can be focussed in a number of problems:

1. *The historical emergence and reception of the Confessio Augustana* in Christendom turns out to be a much more complex process than is realized in the churches today. While the Diet of Augsburg is at the center of this process, it is nevertheless neither its beginning nor its end. A series of factors prepared the way for the text of the Confessio Augustana: the renewal of the proclamation of the gospel, theological clarifications and controversies, Christian teaching (especially Luther's catechisms) and, not least, a number of confessional statements summarizing the Christian faith. These set the final result of Melanchthon's editorial labors in a deeper dimension. The confessional document is thus lifted from the realm of individual theological work and acquires the character of an ecclesial text in which what already actually existed in the congregations (*ecclesiae apud nos*) was confessed. The theological and political circumstances surrounding 1530 are only the trigger for this document. It can only be properly evaluated in its ecclesial context. This context provides the hermeneutical key to the interpretation of the document presented to the Diet. The reception of the Confessio Augustana in the various countries of Europe was inseparable from a process of interpretation. In the light of the later confessional writings up to and including the final Formula of Concord, even the Confessio Augustana can be interpreted in a variety of senses. These different possibilities of interpretation accompanied the subsequent history: in 1555, incorporation in imperial law (and with this a dangerous tendency to confessional demarcation); or again, in 1593, in the Synod of Uppsala (following dangers of re-catholicization and Calvinistic tendencies, a close examination of the text, with a detailed expla-

nation itself given confessional status). Leaving aside the adoption of the Confessio Augustana in the emigrant churches in the succeeding centuries, one sees that the original Reformation process is repeated in the mission churches: proclamation, catechesis, and bible translations are the primary functions, only later to be supplemented by translations of the Confessio Augustana and its (often only) formal inclusion in church constitutions. The need which appeared once again in these churches, i.e., to confess the Christian faith in the new context, took a similar course to that which is found in the history of the emergence of the Confessio Augustana itself. In the history of Reformation times, a series of local confessions made their appearance (taking their direction more or less from the CA), even if they lapsed into oblivion later on.

Remembering this history of the emergence, adoption, and interpretation of the Confessio Augustana throughout the centuries, we see how dynamic the process of producing confessions has been and how dynamic it could be again in our own time (stimulated in the main by the younger churches). All this is a summons to self-examination. How has this stagnation come about? Or, put positively, what renewing currents could be tapped today to reopen a vital, dynamic process which is so essential if the church is to be renewed?

2. *The relationship between Scripture and confession* is another question we need to reflect on. The naive, uncritical assumption that the statements of the Confessio Augustana are in accordance with Scripture provokes the demand for a general orientation about the hermeneutic problems of contemporary exegesis. This leads to a series of questions. It became clear in the consultation that the reference to Scripture does not simply mean the use of biblical texts, but dealing with the Bible as a canon for the confessional utterances of the congregation. The acceptance of the christology of the ancient church as an unchallenged basis of Christian faith shows how far Holy Scripture, while certainly the unique source, has nevertheless led to the elaboration of doctrinal statements. The problems connected with the development of dogma certainly existed long before 1530. From our contemporary standpoint, we are confronted here with a common theme leading us to further reflection with the "religious parties" of that earlier time. Christology - it was said in an introductory address on biblical theology - was the exemplary theme of doctrinal development

in the church and so also of an indispensable doctrinal hermeneutic in general, not only after 1530 but already from the first century onward. In this connection it was commented that Roman Catholic theology is far ahead of us in reflecting upon these problems.

This is supremely important, of course, also for the question of the central article of justification by faith alone "for Christ's sake". After the Reformation had stressed that this article was the center of the Holy Scriptures, detailed biblical scholarship drew attention to the fact that this central belief is accompanied in the Bible by various conceptual terms, even though all these testify that salvation is given through Christ alone and received only in faith through the Holy Spirit. Doctrinal orthodoxy cannot be settled, therefore, simply by the exclusive use of the Reformation doctrinal formulations. It requires a hermeneutical process in which full attention is accorded to the wealth and richness of the biblical message. It can certainly be right to ask for a "material" center of Scripture. The message exists in the living process of proclamation and points back to this ecclesial reality. We shall have to seek help again in the context of ecclesial reality if we are to confess our faith in unity and unanimity. The problem posed by specialization in theological disciplines can only approach solution if the different "opinions" of exegetes are accompanied by the critical norm of dogmatics and thus ultimately "integrated" into the fellowship of the church. Only then do they acquire a confessional quality in accordance with the Scriptures. To reflect on this process in the interplay of theological disciplines and ecclesial reality is today a procedure in keeping with the Reformation times and one which is helpful to us in the confession of our faith.

3. *What validity can the Confessio Augustana lay claim to?* The answer to this question depends on the premises just mentioned. The actual validity this confession has in the churches which appeal to it is a searching question in our self-examination. When our reflection is nourished by various examples and communications of the actual state of affairs, it confronts us with surprising conclusions. The situation runs the whole gamut from ignorance of the Confessio Augustana right across to validity assured by ecclesial law, including a thoroughly thought-out, theologically grounded validity which is discernible in doctrine and life. The jubilee year poses the question whether we see in the CA

merely a historic document without relevance for the transmission of the faith of our fathers into our world today, or whether we can recognize the confession of faith contained in this document as authentic, valid for all times, and essential in different cultural, social, and political contexts.

Is the faith confessed in the Confessio Augustana "valid" in the line of Scripture and in the witness of the fathers - "valid" in the deepest sense, as being binding for being Christian and being the church in all times? Are only parts of it, or only a vital core of it, valid in our time? What sort of normative character does this traditional text possess and what reflection on its meaning helps us to make this validity plausible today? If the contingent historical character of the Confessio Augustana - like that of the Holy Scriptures themselves - must be acknowledged, how can it still remain binding on us?

All these questions depend on the particular way a special *kairos* has offered itself in certain times, an opportunity to confess the Christian faith in a complete and decisive, authentic and determinative way. There are high-water marks like this in church history when a permanently valid process of purifying the Christian faith on the basis of revelation history is possible; so, for example, the creeds of the ancient church with their formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity or the Reformation period, including not least the Confessio Augustana. In it the uniquely valid interpretation of the saving action of the Triune God in history was given expression in order to defend the one faith against all dangers.

In the existential struggle of faith conducted by the church which lives in the midst of the world, the "time-conditioned" affirmation of the confession must bring out afresh the claim to validity essential for salvation. It was stressed in our discussions that precisely the validity of the Confessio Augustana in our churches contains an ecclesial interpretation of the proclamation. The only distinction is that we - in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church - belong to a historical tradition which nurses a certain scepticism of any institutional security (for example, in the form of a *magisterium*). We do so in the interests of faith, in the knowledge of the truth given solely and exclusively through the Holy Spirit. Obviously we confess that the Spirit leads us into all truth

through humanly mediated means, and this as a liberating promise. But that the Spirit goes his "infallible" way through the institutions "in curved lines", in a constant struggle against human errors and weakness, this is an essential truth for justification by faith alone. In other words, only through the sin-forgiving and saving power of the Holy Spirit does binding doctrine become possible and acquire validity in accordance with the Scriptures. In the *Confessio Augustana*, and in the controversies connected with it, our churches are still confronted with the task of reflecting theologically on this process and making room for it in their structures.

4. It is legitimate to ask of any historic text the question of its *contemporary relevance*. In connection with the 1980 jubilee many have voiced scepticism as to whether this question makes any sense. But from our reflections at the consultation concerning the problems of the contemporary world, it became very clear just how fruitful this question really is. If the doctrine of justification by faith is acknowledged to be the center of the Augsburg Confession (and this can hardly be challenged), then we almost immediately discover that the document is extremely relevant to human beings today, whether they are believing Christians or not. A message for our present time can be derived from the *Confessio Augustana*, and this in an unmistakably relevant way. This does, however, require reflection. And the papers of the consultation provide many stimuli to such reflection. One of the reports brings out these possibilities of contemporary relevance with specific reference to the question of the meaning of human life, the question of God, the political and social tasks of Christians and present society generally, and finally the divisions of Christendom. As these questions receive attention in our churches the *Confessio Augustana* becomes the source of Christian participation in the contemporary problems of humanity.

It will have to be noted here, of course, that even in questions of Christian doctrine, the *Confessio Augustana* did not deal with all concrete theological relationships. Some of the vital questions for ecumenical discussion (as, e.g., Mariology and the papacy) were not directly addressed, even although they were already very much a live issue at that time. Recent confessions of faith (for example that of the Batak church) have formulated additional points here. The distance separating society in 1530 and society today has become decisive. New

questions are arising. In the sphere of social ethics in particular there are challenges confronting the church. Society presses us for clarification. In addition, the questions of the Third World have been posed with special urgency by our sister churches there in the light of the Christian faith (e.g., in respect of racism, the liberation of oppressed peoples, economic and political power, etc.). These questions link up with many issues of the global industrial and technological society (ecology, abortion, and human rights, especially the rights of women and children). The question requiring our consideration is the extent to which the Christian message confessed in the *Confessio Augustana* helps us forward today. There are many attempts to answer (and not just address) these questions in studies on the *Confessio Augustana* - not because the church which has accepted the Augsburg Confession as the witness of its fathers would be in a better positions than others to solve these problems, but because in it, through the position presented in the *Confessio Augustana*, doors are opened to the world and therefore to the problems of humanity. The *Confessio Augustana* provides a theological basis which encourages Christians to cooperate with all their fellow human beings in the solution of the world's problems.

5. In our view, we do not have to make a choice between *continuing to write the confession and reformulating it*. The consultation did not feel that the transmission of the confession of 1530 was a burden, still less a hindrance, in an age when progress (with its concomitant contempt for, or at least devaluation of, tradition) is regarded as the hallmark of modernity. The tasks confronting us should actually grow quite naturally out of our memory (in the biblical sense of *anamnesis*). A memorial only feels like a straitjacket when it remains at the level of mere repetition or repristination without stimulating us to reflection. But how is this process to find expression in our churches? The need to go on writing the *Confessio Augustana*, and the church's confession in general, is taken to mean that the very process of interpretation compels us to go on writing. Obviously attention must be paid to the *Confessio Augustana's* own self-interpretation in its historical context. But changing times themselves disclose new problems - despite basic possibilities of repetition - and demand an "accommodation" which does not surrender the essence of the confession, but actually opens it up in the new circumstances.

This application by continuing interpretation is certainly nothing new in the history of the confession. The history not only of the birth of the *Confessio Augustana* but also of its influence clearly demonstrates how this confession was interpreted with the help of other confessional writings (some being limited to local situations). Does this not make it permissible to ask whether the *Confessio Augustana* was not actually "varied" during this process? This in no way calls in question the continuing claim of the *Confessio Augustana Invariata* to final authority. But our churches must achieve greater freedom in the process of interpreting the historical text if they are to develop a sense of history which corresponds to that of the time of the Reformation. Then the question of reformulation in face of the new problems of the world and the churches will be seen in its true light and approached from a perspective which should not strike us as alien.

On the one hand, there is the fact that the basic message of the *Confessio Augustana* is constantly being transferred to fresh contexts and establishes its validity in these contexts. This happens simply because the churches of the Augsburg Confession are spread out geographically, culturally, nationally, and ethnically. It is legitimate here to ask if new confessions are possible. In our material the first fruits of these attempts have been analyzed (India, Batak, Papua New Guinea). The question of the indigenous confession of the Christian faith cannot be suppressed. Experiences in simple verbal translation or adoption by ecclesial law have been sufficiently disappointing to warrant new approaches.

On the other hand, however, the very tradition of our churches can protect us against letting ourselves be pressurized into a constant search for a reformulation of the confession and becoming the victims of a passion for modernity. The *Confessio Augustana* rightly attests the continuity of the church, one of the expressions of which is acceptance of the tradition of the fathers. The charisma of a new confession of faith is not bestowed on every generation. On the contrary, the historically continuous confession in particular becomes the doctrinal touchstone of orthodoxy. Every reformulation of the confession must be justified by reference to the testimony of the fathers and be capable of demonstrating throughout history its unanimous acceptability as a confession of the faith. Only in this way does each reformulation of the confession also make us aware of the resistance which arises in the transmission of the authentic faith and which

makes possible the resistance against religious or other contexts and the preservation of the fellowship of the church in all times.

Finally, the confession is subject to the limitations shared by all human speech. The confession stands in eschatological provisionality before the judgment seat of Christ. But this hope we have been given also includes a venture, namely, that under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit we conceive of the original faith in such a way that there emerges from it a present oriented toward the future. The confession can only be continued and reformulated in a church which lives by justification through Christ by grace alone, and which confesses this faith.

6. In a period of intensive ecumenical efforts we must also reflect seriously on the question of the ecumenical significance of the *Confessio Augustana*. The churches which have accepted this confession as an authoritative doctrinal standard have always considered fellowship among themselves as an obvious corollary. Yet even so, it has not been possible to avoid painful separations. Often the question was the role of the *Confessio Augustana* as a condition of unity. Subscription to the Augsburg Confession (or even the entire Book of Concord) was required as a condition of church fellowship. As a result, boundaries were established even within Lutheranism. Fellowship within Lutheranism was made even more difficult by further doctrinal statements designed to interpret the *Confessio Augustana* and Lutheran "orthodoxy".

Many of these attitudes were called in question as the "ecumenical program" of the *Confessio Augustana* was reflected upon. Where the article on the church (CA VII) was interpreted as a fundamental ecumenical guideline, the very openness of this article to acknowledge church fellowship came more and more to the forefront. Since this article speaks of a consensus in proclamation and the administration of the sacraments, the question arises whether the "sufficient" unity of the church does not include the possibility of recognizing this even where the *Confessio Augustana* is not used as a confession of faith. Is the acceptance of the *text* of the Augsburg Confession the presupposition for declaring church fellowship? Since the *Confessio Augustana* does not describe the confession as a *nota ecclesiae*, but requires a consensus, we have to ask whether a

consensus might not be present even with churches which have no relationship with the *Confessio Augustana*. The ecumenical movement would then have to be regarded almost as a voyage of discovery in which we seek to find and mutually confirm the existing consensus (without the acceptance of the *Confessio Augustana* being automatically required). It is perfectly legitimate, of course, to ask here whether the Augsburg Confession is not being emptied of its significance as a confessional document which decisively shaped out history. The only possible answer by the churches which adhere to the *Confessio Augustana* is for them to formulate their witness in such a way as to bring about the affinity of other doctrinal traditions with this confession.

It is here that the discussion of the possible "Roman Catholic recognition" of the *Confessio Augustana* plays a significant role. For the only church with which the Augsburg Confession enters into controversy is the "Roman Catholic Church" in the form of doctrine and life it presented at the beginning of the 16th century. It is a profoundly moving experience for the churches of the *Confessio Augustana* today to find leading Catholic theologians recognizing the Catholic heritage as claimed by the *Confessio Augustana*. Thus, for the first time in history, "recognition" would mean justification of the correction which the Augsburg Confession signalled to the church at the time of the Reformation. While not exaggerating the chances of such a "recognition", it can be asked what conclusion should be drawn from this for the "correction" voiced in the confession of 1530 and maintained since that time. It is fair to ask whether catholic substance which was not contested in 1530 and has been recognized - even if only piecemeal and in a hidden way - ever since, still remains present in our churches today. In other words, this is a question of our own fidelity to the *Confessio Augustana*, which understood itself not as a separated church but as one which remained faithful to the catholic tradition.

The division was not established in the *Confessio Augustana*, but in the "abuses" which were challenged. - "Under the one Christ" it was still possible to confirm the mutual fellowship. It was only when the Augsburg Confession acquired the function of demarcation that a new direction was taken. This phenomenon must be carefully examined today. For between the approach of the *Confessio Augustana* and the movement of divided churches toward separation there is a wide gulf of

which we should be fully aware, particularly when we celebrate 1530. This is all the more necessary in view of the efforts of the whole ecumenical movement today to achieve a common confession of faith. The question of how far we can bring the basic concern of the Confessio Augustana into these efforts is a decisive ecumenical question. That the church stands or falls with the confession of justification by faith alone for Christ's sake is an incontestable declaration of the one Christian faith. To bring this - not the entire text of the Confessio Augustana - into the contemporary ecumenical discussion is the continuing task of the Reformation confession. Whether we can still do this should be the question put to us by the commemoration of the 1530 confession, a question which sifts our own hearts and compels us to reflection. In the year 1980, this question should not only concern us in a disturbing way, but also guide us joyfully toward the future. (VV)

